



Smart PHOTOGRAPHY

PHOTO FEATURE
Moscow

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Special

Kanyakumari
Valparai

Interview
Dibyendu Das

**Special
Profile**

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Prasad Navale

Profile
Ajay Tharavath

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LENS AND WB CORRECTIONS

TIPS ON

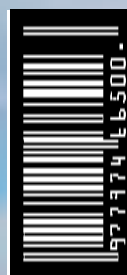
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Which is the best way to improve your photography? Contrary to expectations, it is not through buying the latest or the most expensive equipment. Nor is it going to be possible by merely studying pictures created by others and copying them. This way you will never create your own style and leave your mark on the picture. Is image quality everything? No, please don't get fazed by pixel counts and resolution figures. A lot can be achieved by critically

evaluating your earlier images and honestly examining how they can be improved.

Remember, at the end of the day the only thing that counts is the final image quality. If the final image quality doesn't make the cut, all the pixels in the world cannot change it.

H. S. Billimoria

HERE'S WHAT MAKES US #1

WE ARE GLUED TO THE GLOBAL IMAGING INDUSTRY

Our team is updated with all the benchmarks and road blocks that the field of photography and imaging across the globe experiences. This helps us record the changes in the global perspective, thus making us the first to predict which products will be a rage in the Indian markets.

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Loyalty towards our readers is a given, and their best interests are always on our mind. Every verdict is honest and not influenced by advertisers or personal favorites. So when we say a product is a 'BEST BUY', then, it is just that!

OUR TESTS ARE CONDUCTED BY EXPERTS

All equipment go through a series of tests at the hands of our experts. Our reviewers are experts in the field of photography across the country and have many years of experience. That gives us the foresight to distinguish between a passing trend and a big change in the field of photography and imaging. And finally, our reviews are not extended to just fill up the pages!

WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU

There is no debate on why we are here. Our sole goal is to provide you options and better your judgement in product purchase while, sharing tips and tricks to improve your images. Our biggest joy is in building a bridge between you and your perfect picture!

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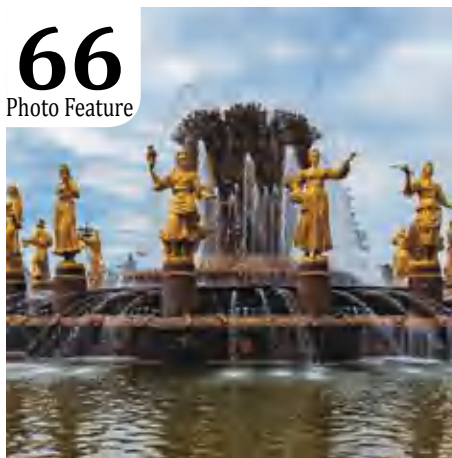
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Master Craftsman



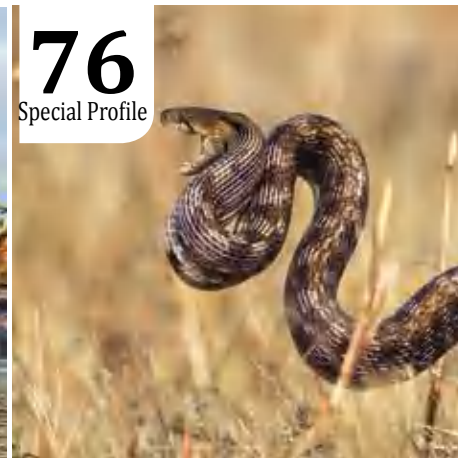
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Just a moment!

Readers can find the updated Buyer's Guide, log on <http://smartphotography.in/news/monthly-special>

Smart Photography thanks the readers who participate in the *Picture of the Month* contest. We would like to bring to your attention a few changes in the rules for submission. From now on, you may send in your images with the longer side measuring atleast 17 inches. Please note that the images have to be horizontal. This permits readers to submit panoramic shots, which was not possible with the current size of 17 x 11 inches.



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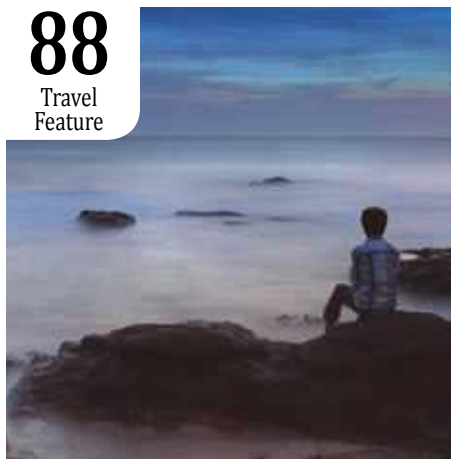
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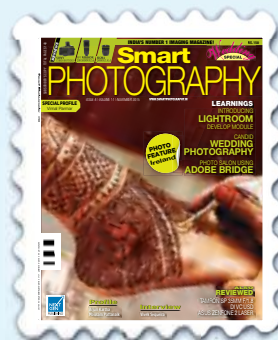
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Request

Dear Sir,

I have been buying Smart Photography for a year now. I am extremely satisfied with my decision. However, I have a small request. It will be great if you can also mention the focal length of the lens in the image information. It will further enhance my photography knowledge.

Yours Sincerely,
Dinakar. J

Thank you Dinakar.
We shall try and implement your request.

Tech Editor

Unique

Dear Editor,

I am so glad that I purchased the wedding special of Smart Photography. I loved all the features especially Stuti and Arjun Kartha's pictures. Truly, wedding photography has come a long way. Please continue carrying such interesting pictures.

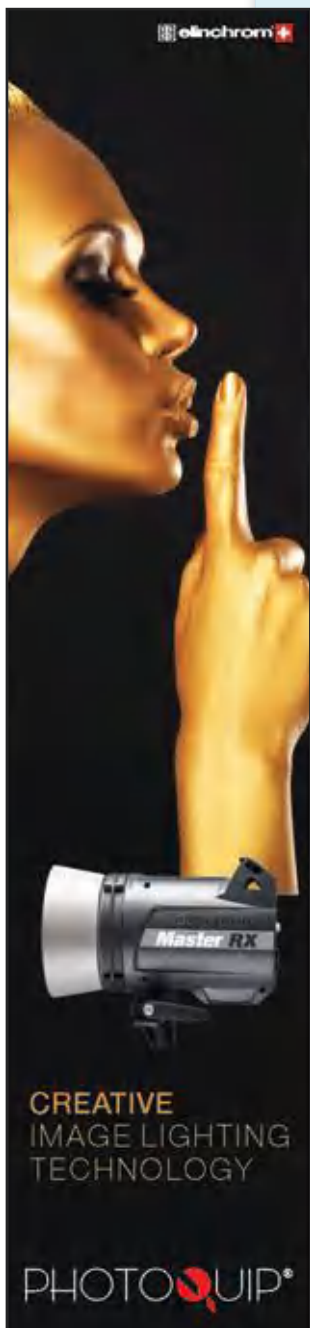
Thank you,
R. Seth

Knowledge

Dear Uncle Ronnie,

I have been a subscriber of Smart Photography for 10 years now. I started off with a basic camera. But thanks to your columns, I have been experimenting and now I can use a D-SLR. It has been such a long journey rich in learnings. Due to the tutorials in the magazine, my Photoshop knowledge has also increased considerably. Keep up the good work.

Yours Faithfully,
A. Chandran



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Snippets

Fujifilm Corp. has announced that it will market a new 1.4x tele-converter for their X-mount lenses. The converter will extend the focal length of the lens by 1.4x. The converter is constructed with 7 elements in 3 groups and features an anti-dust and anti-splash design, which can endure temperatures up to -10°Celsius. The expected street price is 54,500 yen.

Fujifilm released a compact instant film camera—the Instax 70. The camera features a simple and modern design along with a selfie mode and automatic exposure control. The camera is equipped to adjust the focal length and brightness for selfie shots. It also incorporates self-timer for group pictures as well as a landscape and macro mode. The Instax 70 is available in Canary Yellow, Island Blue and Moon White.

Shenyang Zhongyi Optics has released two versions of its Lens Turbo Adapter. The adapters allow Canon EF lenses and Nikon F mount lenses to be attached to Micro Four Thirds cameras.

Hewlett-Packard announced that it will shrink 10% of its work force. Nearly 30,000 employees will be laid off. Meg Whitman took over the reigns of HP as Chief Executive in 2011. This restructuring was announced in 2012. 54,000 jobs had been cut at HP. Whitman will also become Chief Executive of HP Enterprise, which will sell computer servers, data storage software etc.

Seagate launches 8TB drive

Seagate Technology plc (NASDAQ: STX) presented the first 8TB surveillance hard disk drive at the China Public Security Expo (CPSE) 2015 in Shenzhen.

“With HD recordings now standard for surveillance applications, Seagate’s Surveillance HDD product line has been designed to support these extreme workloads with ease and is capable of a 180TB/year workload, three times that of a standard desktop drive. It also includes surveillance-optimized firmware to support up to 64 cameras and is the only product in the industry that can support surveillance solutions, from single-bay DVRs to large multi-bay NVR systems,” said Matt Rutledge, Seagate’s Senior Vice President, Client Storage.

This 3.5 inch drive has the capacity to store about 800 hours of high-definition content captured by up to 64 cameras simultaneously. It also features rotational vibration sensors enabling it to perform in systems with eight or more drives. The usage of this device is ideal in businesses like casino and manufacturing plants, which require bulk storage for HD content and video analytics.

This hard disk drive is also equipped with data recovery services. Be it loss of data due to accidental damage, hardware failure or computer viruses, the data recovery plan is perfect for users, who lack IT support to protect their data.

Data can be restored within two weeks depending on the details of recovery. The plan is activated at the time of purchase and provides three years of data recovery at a fraction of what it would cost to recover this data.



Sigma conceptualises 20mm f/1.4 lens for full-frame D-SLRs

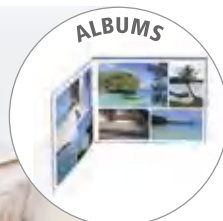
Sigma Corp. announced the Sigma 20mm f/1.4 DG HSM/Art lens—a one of its kind ultrawide lens for 35mm full-frame D-SLR cameras. Colour aberration is corrected by utilising 2 FLD (F Low Dispersion) glass elements, 5 SLD (Special Low Dispersion) glass elements and large both-sided aspherical lens elements with an outer

diameter of 59mm. Ultra-wideangle lenses make for effective landscape and star photography, but this particular lens is apt for photography under low light conditions and portraits. The lens will be available for Sigma, Canon and Nikon mounts starting November 20, 2015 at a suggested list price of 150,000 yen.

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Sony unveils palm-sized RX 1R II

Sony Corp. announced the latest addition to its Cyber-shot RX compact camera line—the RX 1R II. The camera is mounted with a 42.4MP back-illuminated Exmor R CMOS sensor coupled with a BIONZ processing engine to attain optimum resolution and sensitivity (ISO 100-25600, expandable to 50-102400). It is equipped with a fixed focal length ZEISS Sonnar T* 35mm f/2 lens. The camera is also assembled with an optical variable low pass filter that can be set to 'off', 'standard' or 'high' based on the user's preference with the

availability of low pass filter bracketing. The RX 1R II is also fitted with a retractable XGA OLED viewfinder. The camera is compatible with Wi-Fi and NFC along with Sony's PlayMemories available for Android and iOS. The camera will be made available at 3,500 € from December 2015. Availability in the domestic market is yet to be decided.



Manfrotto announces compact travel tripod

Manfrotto has made a second addition to its BeFree tripod lineup with the BeFree One tripod. Its design allows it to be folded away into a compact form and is also lightweight for easy transportation. This new model utilises its four legs to be collapsed to just 32 cm/12.6 inches from a maximum height of 130 cm/ 51.18 inches. The tripod features an aluminium ball and socket head and can support up to 2.5kg. The model weighs only 1.3 kg. The tripod comes with a 10-year warranty and a padded shoulder bag. It is available in black, grey or red. The tripod is priced at £124.95 and can be purchased from select retailers.

Zeiss introduces new wide-angle lenses

Zeiss unwrapped a new wide-angle lens for Sony E-mount cameras—the Loxia 21mm f/2.8. The lens is an add-on to the Loxia 35mm f/2 and 50mm f/2 that were showcased last year. Christophe Casenave, Product Manager at Zeiss camera lenses said, "Since the Sony α7 series has been stirring up the photography market, the calls for a powerful super wide-angle lens were growing ever louder. For many photographers such a lens is the missing tool in their gear. ZEISS is now meeting that demand with the Loxia 21mm f/2.8 lens." The lens will be made available for purchase

starting December 2015 at a suggested retail price of US\$1499. Zeiss also announced an addition to its Otus lineup of lenses—the Otus 28mm f/1.4. This lens is available in Canon and Nikon mounts. This particular lens's strengths are seen in landscape and nature photography. The lens consists of 16 elements in 13 groups. One of the lens elements has an aspheric optical surface while one more element is aspherical on both the sides. The other eight lens elements are made of a special glass. The lens will be available for purchase in Q2 of 2016. The retail price is yet to be announced.

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Canon makes an addition to its PowerShot series

Canon launched the PowerShot G5 X and PowerShot G9 X. Both the cameras are mounted with a one-inch Type 20.2MP CMOS sensor. They offer an ISO range of 125-12800. They also feature a built-in ND filter for enhanced exposure control in bright shooting conditions.

The Canon PowerShot G5 X is incorporated with a built-in EVF. The camera houses a 24-100mm equivalent f/1.8-f/2.8 lens. The lens has a nine-blade iris diaphragm and an optical Image Stabilisation (IS) system. The camera also features a three-inch 1.04 million dot touch panel LCD screen that enables one-touch control of different camera settings and a Vari-Angle design that enables easy viewing from various shooting angles. The Canon PowerShot G9 X



incorporates a 28-84mm equivalent f/2-f/4.9 lens. A lens-mounted control ring has been added that assists in adjusting several functions including customisable manual focus. The camera

can continuously take pictures up to six frames per second. The Canon PowerShot G5 X and the Canon PowerShot G9 X are priced at \$799.99 and \$529.99 respectively.



Ricoh to venture into 3D printer market

Ricoh Co. announced that it will foray into the 3D printer market with its offering—the Ricoh AM S5500P. The company is targeting European countries. Ricoh has been marketing other makers' products since 2014. The company has also targeted to generate a sales of 5 billion yen by March 2017. The Ricoh AM S5500P has been conceptualised with Aspect Co. The latter creates 3D products by using resin powder and every layer is strengthened by laser.



New upgrade

YN300 III + APP LED Video Light

- * Equipped with multi-channel wireless remote control, which can off-camera adjust the luminance and power switch, meanwhile you can respectively control 8 groups of luminance and power switch of the video light, allows you operate more easily.
- * You can download the APP from the official website, control the LED video light through the mobile phone, read the current luminance and channel of the LED video light. You can also respectively control 8 groups of luminance and power switch of the video light, allows you control the LED video light as needed.
- * Adopts the Yongnuo proprietary LED driving technology, definitely not appear the corrugated, stroboscopic and other negative phenomena when shooting.
- * Adopts the encoder digital dimming which can be separately adjusted to rough dimming and fine dimming modes.
- * Adopts LED digital display screen, the power output will be more intuition.
- * Supports external DC power input, which convenient for your long shooting (the power adapter is optional).
- * There are two color temperature of for your option.



YN600L II + APP YONGNUO LED Video Light

- * YONGNUO LED Video Light Wireless Control System
 1. Supports controlling the parameters of this video light with mobile APP; separately controls switch, brightness and color temperature of the video light of 8 groups simultaneously
 2. Video lights of the same channel supports 2.4G wireless sync
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 4. Supports YONGNUO LED video light wireless control system, mutually communicate with YN900 video light and YN300III video light
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RA average value greater than 95; close to natural light and perfectly restores the color of the subject
- * 600 LED beads with large chip
 1. Supports NP-F series lithium battery (suggested use)
 2. Supports connected to the external DC main for a long time service; adaptable voltage: 8V 5A (Do not use laptop AC adapter)
- * Forced Air Cooling System
- * Adopts proprietary LED driving technology which specially developed for supplementary lighting to effectively avoid corrugation, stroboscopic flash and dithering
- * Two color temperature for selection: 5500K/3200K~5500K



Canon announces 4K broadcast lens

Canon revealed a 4K zoom for professional broadcast cameras—the CJ20ex7.8b—which offers a 20x zoom ratio and focal length up to 156mm. A prototype was first showcased at IBC 2015 in Amsterdam. This lens will be an add-on to Canon's CJ12ex4.3B—a 2/3" portable 4K zoom with the widest focal length. The company's new lens is apt for sporting events, news coverage, documentaries, indoor and outdoor shooting etc.

The new lens features a built-in 2x extender, which delivers an optimal optical performance even when photographing at the 312mm telephoto-end focal length. Keeping the needs of the broadcast industry in check, the lens is complete with a compact and lightweight body design.



Sony introduces α68 with 4D focus

Sony has unveiled the α68 which features a 4D focus system. It uses no less than 79 autofocus detection points including 15 cross points along with an f/2.8 AF sensor point for low-lit scenes. The camera is mounted with a 24MP APS-C Exmor CMOS image sensor with an ISO range of up to 25600. The sensor is coupled with the BIONZ X image processor that uses various technologies like detail reproduction, area-specific noise reduction etc. The camera also features an OLED Tru-Finder, helping in proper composing of movies or stills. The α68 also incorporates a 2.7-inch Type LCD monitor that tilts up to 135° upwards or 55° downwards. The backlit top display of the camera helps photographers confirm their camera settings while photographing hand-held or on a tripod. The camera will be made available for purchase from March 2016 for nearly €600 body only or €700 with DT18-55mm F3.5-5.6 SAM II lens.

Manfrotto to market improved mini tripods

Manfrotto Corp. has announced an enhanced version of its mini Pixi series tripod—the Pixi Evo. The improved model can accommodate weight up to 2.5kg and its legs can widen up to 80°. Taking pictures from the ground level as low as 10.5 cm becomes possible. The incorporation of Aluminium on its upper part and Polymer ensures that the tripod is lightweight and steady. The tripod weighs 250g and its length is distance as low as 10.5cm from the ground level becomes possible. In the earlier model, taking pictures from a vertical level was not possible. The Pixi Evo fulfills this shortcoming.

The tripod is available in red, black and white at 5,700 yen.

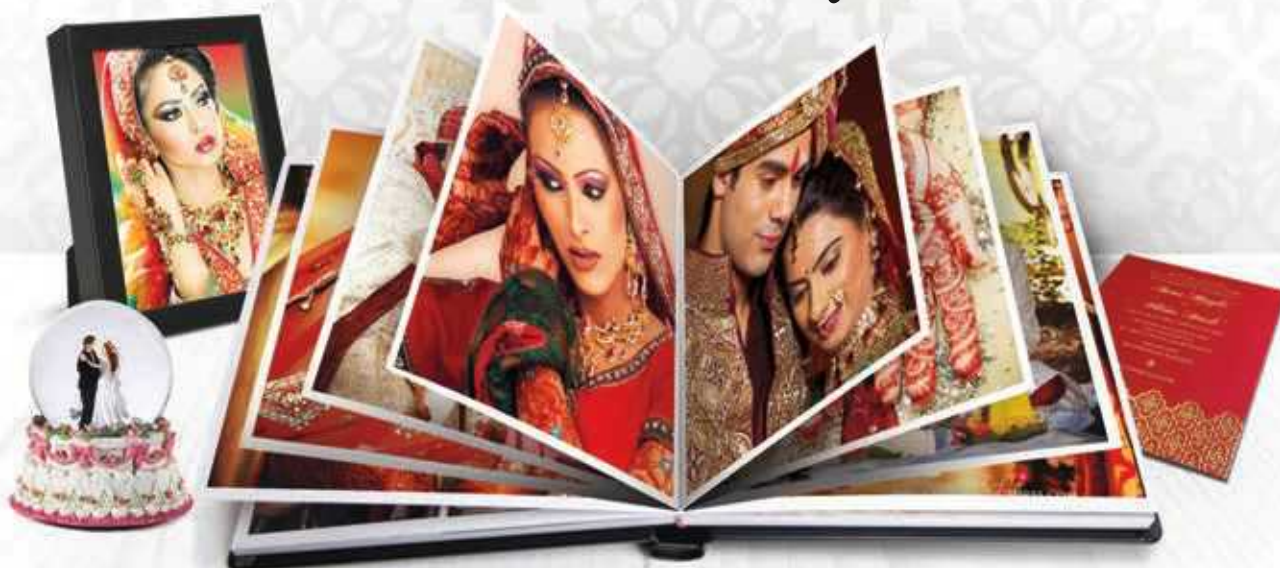




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Nikon expected to declare better-than-anticipated profits

Nikon's profits between April-September reduced by 27% owing to the drop in the sales of digital cameras in the North American market. But sales generated by higher-end models and a weak yen decreased the expected loss. Nikon has anticipated a group operating profit of about 9.5 billion yen (US\$79.8 million) surpassing its previous forecast of a 39% decline to 8 billion yen (US\$67.2 million).

A difference has been observed in sales

in Europe. The rise in the demand for smartphones has reduced the demand for low-end digital compact cameras. The sales of D-SLR cameras and other models with interchangeable lenses have been affected because of a slow global economy.

Higher-end models relatively delivered favourable profits in the first half. However, sales of interchangeable lens cameras dropped by 6% to 20.5 million units. The profitability quotient rose for mid-end and high-end sets priced

between 120,000 yen (US\$1,008) and 150,000 yen (US\$1,260). Profits for economical models decreased. Group sales increased by 4% to nearly 390 billion yen (US\$3.277 billion) close to the estimated 3.84 billion yen (US\$184.9 million). The weakening yen against Euro supported their performance.

Nikon is anticipating its operating profit to reduce by 22% to 34 billion yen (US\$285.7 million). This is still 4 billion yen (US\$33.6 million) higher than the initial forecast.

Fujifilm reports profits for first half of 2015-2016

Fujifilm Holdings stated its profit increased by 12.7% year-on-year to 80.7 billion yen. Net profit went up by 11.6% to 84.6 billion yen on total group sales of 1226.1 billion yen, which indicated a rise by 3.6%. Fujifilm sold 400,000 units of digital cameras in Q1. The number decreased

to 340,000 units in Q2. On the whole, sales were favourable in business segments like imaging, medical, graphics etc.

In the imaging business, instant photography was profitable for cameras and films. This is attributed

to the sales expansion in the European and American markets. The company also upped its sales targets for the entire year from 4.6 million units to 5 million. Fujifilm is also shifting its product mix to higher classes focusing on the X-series.

Canon posts dwindling sales for Q3

Canon Inc. announced a 15.6% decline in its net profit year-on-year for Q3 of 2015. The figure came up to 49.180 billion yen. Profit in operation increased by 7.6% to 77.259 billion yen on total sales of 925.782 billion yen, which is a 6.1% gain. During Q3, despite a gradual and positive turnaround in the sales of interchangeable lens digital cameras in Europe and Japan, severe conditions prevailed in the other regions. Sales

generated by the imaging systems dropped by 4.2% to 302.4 billion yen. Profit in operation decreased by 3.8% to 41.7 billion yen.

With regards to MFDs and laser printers, sales of colour machines were favourable. However, sales of monochrome models was sluggish. For the first nine months of 2015, the company noted a 6.4% drop in operating profits, which came

to approximately 248.186 billion yen. Net profit decreased by 19% to 151.305 billion yen. Imaging System business sales dropped by 4.6% to 897.7 billion yen. Operating profits also fell by 11% to 121.3 billion yen. Sales volume of interchangeable lens cameras plummeted by 17% and compact models' sales shrank by 28%. Canon revised its outlook for sales volume for the whole year to 5.5 million units for interchangeable lens cameras.

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Toshiba in talks with Sony on image sensor business

Toshiba is in advanced talks regarding the selling of its image sensor business to Sony in a deal estimated at around 20 billion yen (US\$166.6 million). The move has come after Toshiba contemplated restructuring after an accounting scandal. It would result in ceding some of its production facilities in the

city of Oita. Sony would step up as a global leader in image sensors fitted in smartphones and other electronics equipped with camera functions.

Other than production equipment, Sony will also take over some employees as well as customer accounts, which include automakers and camera manufacturers.

Toshiba will in effect withdraw from the image sensor market and concentrate its semiconductor investment on its more competitive memory business. The company also has plans to mass produce its expanded-capacity flash memory—NAND—at Yokkaichi near Nagoya in Q1 of 2016.

Sony will use this acquisition to

expand its CMOS sensor production capacity. The company had also announced plans to channel about 420 billion yen (US\$3.5 billion) in equity and debt financing into production as well as research and development of these components. The company also intends to increase its monthly output by nearly 30% till September 2016. Sony has prepared itself for an increase in demand for image sensors.

According to Techno Systems Research, last year, Toshiba's global market share in CMOS sensors summed up to just about 1.9% in comparison to Sony's 40.3% share. Sony's investments in this business will also help Toshiba in keeping the competition at bay from Samsung Electronics.

Sony reports improved operating income gains

Sony Corp. announced its operating income, which was 184.9 billion yen (US\$1,541 million) in comparison to an operating loss of 15.8 billion yen in the same period of the last fiscal year. Sony posted a net profit of 115.9 billion yen on sales of 3700.8 billion yen (US\$30840 million), flat year-on-year due to a substantial decrease in the Mobile communications segment offset by an increase in sales of the Game and Network services and Device segments along with the impact of foreign exchange rates.

Sharp profit declines by 84 bn yen

Sharp Corp. announced a net profit of 26 billion yen, down by 84 billion yen over the previous year. This year-on-year drop was attributed to the sluggish sales of LCD panels for smartphone usage and severe price competition was also stated as one of the reasons for this performance. The company has estimated that sales will decrease by 100 billion yen in comparison to the previous projection of 2,700 billion yen. The profit in operation is about 10 billion yen, which is 70 billion less from the earlier projection.

Canon and Fujitsu tie up to develop corporate support system

Canon Inc. and Fujitsu Ltd. announced that they will create a marketing support system for corporate professionals by utilising network surveillance camera systems. Both the companies are developing a solution to assist logistics and tourism industries. Canon will utilise its expertise in image analysis from the images collected in a shop and analyse the movement of shoppers. For example, information related to shoppers will be clubbed into rough age groups and their gender along with their movement from product

to product. Fujitsu's expertise lies in data analysis. It will estimate the buying behaviour of these people and store the information on its cloud computer system. Through this data, suggestions will be made regarding the way in which products should be laid out and suitable marketing activities keeping in check shoppers' characteristics. When it comes to the tourism industry, combination of network cameras and Fujitsu's GPS services will suggest touristic facilities and the layout of souvenir shops for efficient operations.

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Konica Minolta unveils printing system

Konica Minolta launched the Bizhub Press C71hc, which provides printing services based on advanced colour reproduction capabilities of the manufacturer's proprietary high-chroma toner.

There has been an increase in the need for printing product images or photo albums from digital cameras along with aligning online and printed communication. The demand for precise reproduction of RGB workflows has increased too. A typical CYMK printer may not be able to bring out 'super' vivid colours in a print due to a narrower colour range. Konica Minolta's new offering has an extended colour range that is closer to sRGB.

Another feature of this machine is its

combination with workflow software—the Print Xpress. Armed with booklet production, binding, auto ring binding and stacking capacity of up to 10,000 sheets allow one-step printing and finishing without any manual intervention.

Yuji Nakata, Managing Director, Konica Minolta India says, "The colour production printing market is steadily growing and there can be no doubt

that RGB data and the high-chroma technology will continue to increase in importance in the future. In this context, Konica Minolta is proud to introduce the 3rd generation of high-chroma products with the new Bizhub Press C71hc."

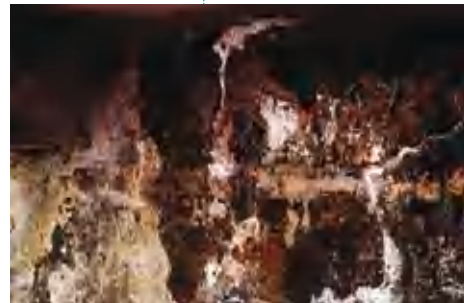


Theme revealed for SignedPRINTS' photography contest

SignedPRINTS is organising the 4th instalment of its photography contest. Participation is open for all Indian residents. The theme of the contest, 'Playful Kids', revolves around childhood memories whether it was playing with marbles or football, skipping ropes, jumping fences, playing hide and seek etc. Photographers will have to recreate these memories. The deadline for submission of entries is 15th February, 2016. Three cash prizes of Rs.5000, Rs.2000 and Rs.3000 will be rewarded to the winners holding the first, second and third position respectively. To enter, visit www.threedots.in

Experience abstract photography with Sayali Ghotikar

There is a beauty to patterns and textures that the non-artistic eye often misses to admire. Sayali Ghotikar—a student of BFA from Sir J.J. Institute of Applied Arts and a photographer—brings out such minute details that are often missed by the common man. To her, there is a charm in an old car, a wall filled with moss etc. It is all about the perspective. She has captured the



details of daily life in her pictures, which she has painted with her camera.

She will be holding a solo exhibition—The

Untold Story— at Jehangir Terrace Art Gallery from 16th December to 22nd December. Check out her interpretation of abstract photography.

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Flipkart goes offline with Spice Hotspot

Flipkart has tied up with Spice Hotspot to feature its phone portfolio in retail stores across India. At selected outlets, the store staff will assist customers in placing their orders on the Flipkart app. Customers can accept the delivery of their phones either at the Spice Hotspot outlet or any address of their convenience. With this association, a larger target audience can be reached, who are not too comfortable with technology. They can place their orders at a store near them.

Both the companies have designed an experience wherein customers will get to see a live demo of the phones on display in exclusive experience zones. The staff will also address product queries.

Belkin announces 4-Port car charger

Belkin launched the Road Rockstar—a 4-Port car charger allowing up to 4 people to simultaneously charge their electronic devices. The charger has been created with a 6-foot cable and 4 USB ports. The 2 front USB ports supply power for devices at a shared power of 2.4A while the back ports provide 2.4A per port for charging two tablets. Also available with the charger is a double sided 3M tape that helps mounting the charger anywhere in the car for easy accessibility.

The charger is available Rs.2999 from retail outlets, online retailers and dealers.



Canon unveils EOS C300 Mark II

Canon launched the EOS C300 Mark II digital cinema camera at the Broadcast India Show in Mumbai. The camera is equipped with several features like 4K/2K/Full HD internal and external

recording (including 4K RAW output) and a 10-bit Canon Log 2 Gamma.

Andrew Koh, Vice President of Consumer Imaging and Information Center, Canon India, said, "After extensive research and user inputs, we developed the EOS C300 Mark II digital cinema camera that promises to deliver improved image-expression capabilities as well as operability, ruggedness and expandability. Moreover, the improved features including 4K/2K/Full HD internal and external recording (including 4K RAW output) and a new 10-bit Canon Log 2 Gamma add to the uniqueness of the product."

The camera is mounted with an 8.85MP Super 35mm 16:9 CMOS sensor

that supports 4K recording with a maximum resolution of 4096x2160 pixels.

The camera keeps noise at bay and delivers ISO speeds of up to 102,400 when taking pictures in low-light conditions. The sensor also cuts down data-readout time to about half of the earlier EOS C300. The camera will be available at Rs. 12,99,000.



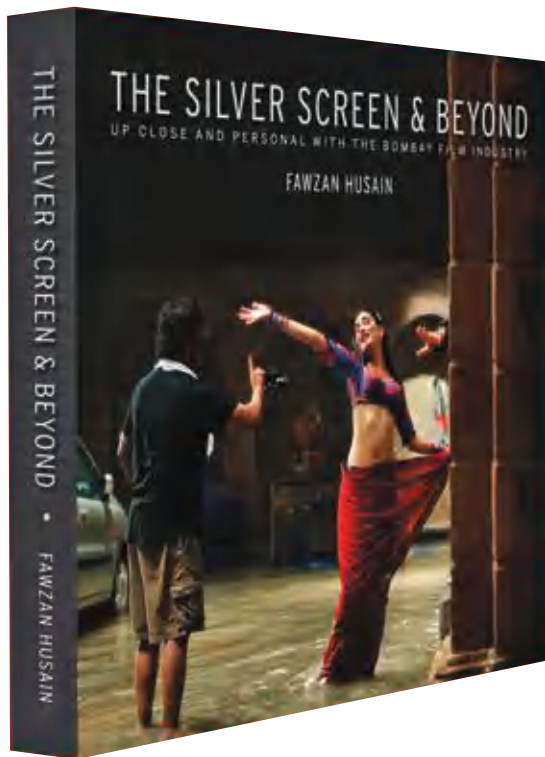
Pragyan: Photo contest

Pragyan—the annual techno-management festival of National Institute of Technology (Trichy) is conducting an online photography contest. Based on the theme Fractals, entries will be accepted from 25th November 2015 till 20th December 2015. 20 contestants will be shortlisted for the second round, which will take place from 15th January to 30th January, 2016. The contest will be judged by Kishor Krishnamoorthi and Saurabh Chatterjee. Winners will be rewarded with an opportunity to intern with the esteemed judges. Entries can be emailed to santhosh@pragyan.org

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'The Silver Screen & Beyond' coming soon to book stores



Fawzan Husain has taken a closer look at 'Bollywood' in his coffee table book, 'The Silver Screen & Beyond' through a series of images. In

his pictures, Fawzan has captured the behind-the-scene elements visible on the sets. Frontal portraits have been eliminated

from his book. Real people have been portrayed sans the glamour element.

What inspired him to pen this book was the fascination with actors and actresses from the film industry and the entire bubble of glamour around them. This craze for the film industry was visible everywhere be it on billboards, rickshaws, restaurants etc. Through this book, Fawzan provides people

with a microscopic perspective on everything non-glamorous about the film industry.

Micromax takes wraps off Canvas 5

Micromax Informatics Ltd. announced the launch of its flagship phone—the Micromax Canvas 5. The latest offering from Micromax is equipped with 3GB RAM, 2900 mAh battery, a 1.3GHz octa core processor and 4G LTE capability. To ensure easy accessibility to its customers, the company has tied up with Bajaj Finance to operate a 12 month EMI scheme wherein customers will have to pay four advance EMIs at the time of purchase. The customers will also be provided with a 7 day doorstep service policy ensuring a convenient user experience.

The smartphone's 5.2 inch FHD (1920x1080) IPS screen is filled with 16.7M colours that makes graphics come alive. With improved sunlight readability, the battery power is utilised judiciously. The battery also supports talk time of 10 hours and standby time of 275 hours.

The Canvas 5 is furnished with a rear camera of 13MP and front camera of 5MP. Additional features like video pop-out, panorama mode with 4x zoom, night mode, pre and post photo settings add to the experience. Pre-settings help in aspects like skin smoothening, sharpening, eye enlargement etc. Post-settings involve removal of eye bags, blemishes, brighter eyes etc. The video pop-out feature allows users to 'pop-out' the video from the media player in a separate window and move it around. The Smart Wake Gestures in the phone ensure convenience and quicker accessibility.

Vineet Taneja, CEO, Micromax Informatics said, "With the launch of Canvas 5 around Diwali, we are introducing our newest Canvas flagship that will be a game changer in the smartphone space targeting those who don't want to compromise and are keen to experience the new levels of multi-tasking and performance. The brand's consistent growth in the market has made us confident that we are headed in the right direction and would continue our pursuits to breach barriers and reach newer heights further consolidating our leadership in the market."

The Canvas 5 is priced at Rs.11,999 and is available in colours such as Space Grey and Tan Brown.



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Beyond Light

A photo exhibition aptly titled 'Beyond Light' was on show at The Jehangir Terrace Art Gallery in Mumbai from 28th October - 3rd November 2015. The exhibition showcased the work of Shamim Akhtar, who is a civil servant by profession. Shamim is a wanderer, biker, author, film-maker, blogger, mystique and of course, a photographer. This was his 10th solo exhibition.

The display was unique; all the photographs (40 of them) were in black & white – not the usual black & white, but Infra-red! Twenty images depicted beautiful Ladakh while the other twenty showed Delhi (Dilli) in all its glory. Each image of 24x36" was mounted in a wooden 36x48" frame. All the images were printed on archival German canvas with Epson varnish.



Photography honours



Vadehra Art Gallery presents photography exhibition



Photo Credit: Vadehra Art Gallery and Babu Eshwar Prasad



Nanda Kishore Yalamanchili—from Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh—has received the international distinction of Associate of Royal

Photographic Society (ARPS), United Kingdom in the Travel category. The above image was one of his entries for the distinction. Congratulations!

Vadehra Art Gallery brought together a group of nine artists with their unique take on photography in an exhibition, 'Off the record: Meditations on the Photographic Image' curated by Vidya Sivadas. Held in New Delhi, this show was also an official collateral of the Delhi Photo Festival. The exhibition presented images that showed the connection between photography, painting and other forms of art. The artists whose works were on display were Atul Bhalla, Anju Dodiya, M F Husain, Showkat

Kathjoo, Kishen Khann, Juul Kraijer, Susanta Mandal, Babu Eshwar Prasad and Charmi Gada Shah. Atul Bhalla paid homage to the water bodies in Delhi, which are dry now, through his work. His pictures brought out absence, loss and invisibility.

Dutch artist Juul Kraijer who turned to photography after his long tryst with drawing, brought out the worldly qualities of Renaissance portraiture while employing surrealism techniques.

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A NOTE TO OUR READERS

1. The picture has to be horizontal.
2. Kindly ensure that the longer side should measure atleast 17 inches, at 300ppi.
3. Low resolution images will not be accepted.
4. We do not check images on online galleries.
5. Kindly ensure complete contact/address details are provided. Winners will have to collect their prize from *SP's* Mumbai office or send an authorised representative to do so.
6. Please make sure that your picture does not have your name/logo on it.



**Picture
of the
Month**

Photograph by
Amartya Mukherjee

PICTURE OF THE MONTH

We are sure that all of you have a few pictures that you think are prize worthy. It happens very often that you don't know where to send the image that could put a feather in your cap. If you have such images (we're sure you have many!), send us ONE such horizontal image. If it qualifies, we shall publish it as a double-spread.

- You have to guarantee that the picture was shot by you
- If there are people in the picture who can be identified, we'll need a model release
- The picture should not have been printed elsewhere (magazine newspaper, or offered to any publication)
- Mark the entry as "Picture of the Month" and rename the file using your name
- You may send images via print/e-mail to: Next Gen Publishing Ltd., 2nd Floor, C Wing, Trade World, Kamala Mills Compound, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel (W), Mumbai 400013 (or) sphoto.india@gmail.com



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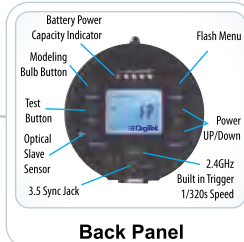
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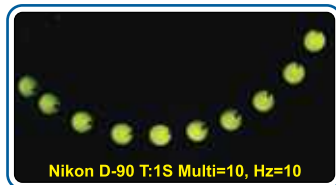


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9. High-speed flash duration: Max 1/11000s



Model	DSF-600 Pro Plus
Output	600 Watt
GN (ISO 100/2m/Standard Reflector)	56
Recycling Time	0.1-4.5s
Power Range	7f-stop (1/64-1/1)
Multi Times	5,10,15,20,25 times
Frequency (Hz)	1,2.....10 times/sec.
High Speed Flash Duration	FP-1/11000, F2-1/9000, F3-1/6000, F4-1/4000, F5-1/2000
Battery-Charging Time	6 Hrs (With Self-Protection)
Color Temperature	5500K±200k
Sensor Distance	≥15m
Protection Device	Overheating Protection
Triggering Way	100m, with inner 2.4GHz Remote Control
Modeling Bulb	5W LED Light
Buzz	Yes (ON/OFF)
Power Source	Interchangeable & Memory Less Battery
Battery-Charging Way	Plug-in Charging Type
Li-ion Battery	12V-6000mAh



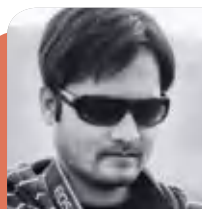
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Landscape Delights

As told to **Disha Khemchandani**



Shishir Kar

Shishir Kar's photography journey began in 2007 with a film camera. He moved to the digital world in 2008 with a Sony compact camera and since then, there has been no looking back. Born and brought

up in Sambalpur, Odisha; Shishir was captivated by landscapes and man-made structures in his hometown thereby finding his calling in architecture and landscape photography. He also enjoys travel photography. His pictures have been showcased by different media. To view more of his work, visit www.facebook.com/Shishir-KAR-Fotography | **SP**

Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark II; Lens: Tokina 10-17mm;
Aperture: f/16; Shutter speed: 60sec; ISO: 100

Fort Aguada, Goa





Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark II; **Lens:** Tokina 10-17mm;
Aperture: f/22; **Shutter speed:** 10sec; **ISO:** 50

Connecting Mumbai



When nature smiles



Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark II; **Lens:** Tokina 10-17mm;
Aperture: f/22; **Shutter speed:** 30sec; **ISO:** 100



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Sambalpuri Rhythm

Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark II; Lens: Canon 24-105mm;
Aperture: f/4; Shutter speed: 1/100sec; ISO: 3200

Padmasambhava Mahavihara monastery



Victoria in all its beauty



St. Cathedral Church, Goa



Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark II; Lens: Tokina 10-17mm;
Aperture: f/16; Shutter speed: 1/500sec; ISO: 400

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Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark II; **Lens:** Tokina 10-17mm;
Aperture: f/9; **Shutter speed:** 1/100sec; **ISO:** 800



Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark II; **Lens:** Tokina 10-17mm;
Aperture: f/25; **Shutter speed:** 30sec; **ISO:** 50



Magnificence

Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark II; **Lens:** Tokina 10-17mm;
Aperture: f/20; **Shutter speed:** 30sec; **ISO:** 800



Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark II; **Lens:** Tokina 10-17mm;
Aperture: f/16; **Shutter speed:** 1/320sec; **ISO:** 200

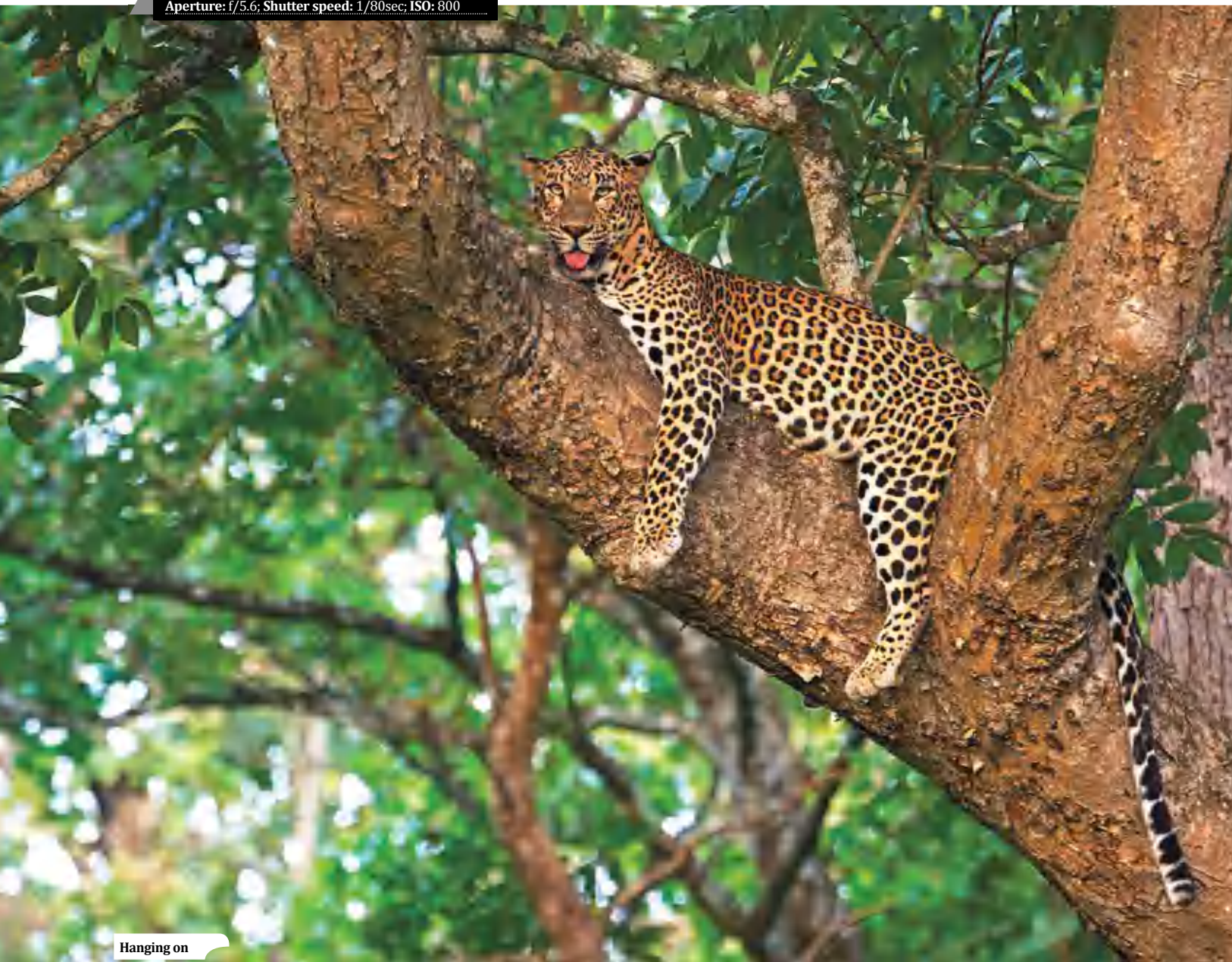


Shanti Stupa

Moments in the Wild

As told to **Disha Khemchandani**

Camera: Nikon D7000; Lens: Nikkor 80 - 400mm VR II
Aperture: f/5.6; Shutter speed: 1/80sec; ISO: 800



Hanging on



Ajay Tharavath

Ajay Tharavath is an entrepreneur based out of Kolkata. His thirst with wildlife photography began when he started visiting Tiger reserves 15 years ago. He would observe wildlife and their behavioural traits. It was only about five years ago that he purchased his first D-SLR camera and a basic zoom

lens. Since then his interest continued to grow and wildlife photography became a passion. Interaction with different wildlife photographers and observing their work helped him hone his skills.

He strongly believes that wildlife is one of the toughest genres of photography as the subject is never in the photographer's control. Good subject knowledge helps in predicting animal behaviour, anticipating an action, visualizing a frame and releasing the shutter at the right moment.

Camera: Nikon D7000; Lens: Nikkor 80 - 400mm VR II
Aperture: f/5.6; Shutter speed: 1/80sec; ISO: 1100

Mother care



Tiger queen



Camera: Nikon D7000; Lens: Nikkor 80 - 400mm VR II
Aperture: f/5.6; Shutter speed: 1/400sec; ISO: 1100

Smart Photography
December 2015

Camera: Nikon D7000; Lens: Nikkor 80 - 400mm VR II
Aperture: f/8; Shutter speed: 1/500sec; ISO: 200



Pachyderm paradise

Camera: Nikon D7000; Lens: Nikkor 600 mm f/4
Aperture: f/4; Shutter speed: 1/640sec; ISO: 100

And the argument continues



Chirpy soul



Camera: Nikon D7000; Lens: Nikkor 600 mm f/4
Aperture: f/4; Shutter speed: 1/800sec; ISO: 100

Camera: Nikon D7000; Lens: Nikkor 105 mm f/2.8
Aperture: f/18; Shutter speed: 1/250sec; ISO: 200



Queen of darkness



Size does not matter

Camera: Nikon D7000 ; Lens: Nikkor 105 mm f/2.8
Aperture: f/14; Shutter speed: 1/125sec; ISO: 400

FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY

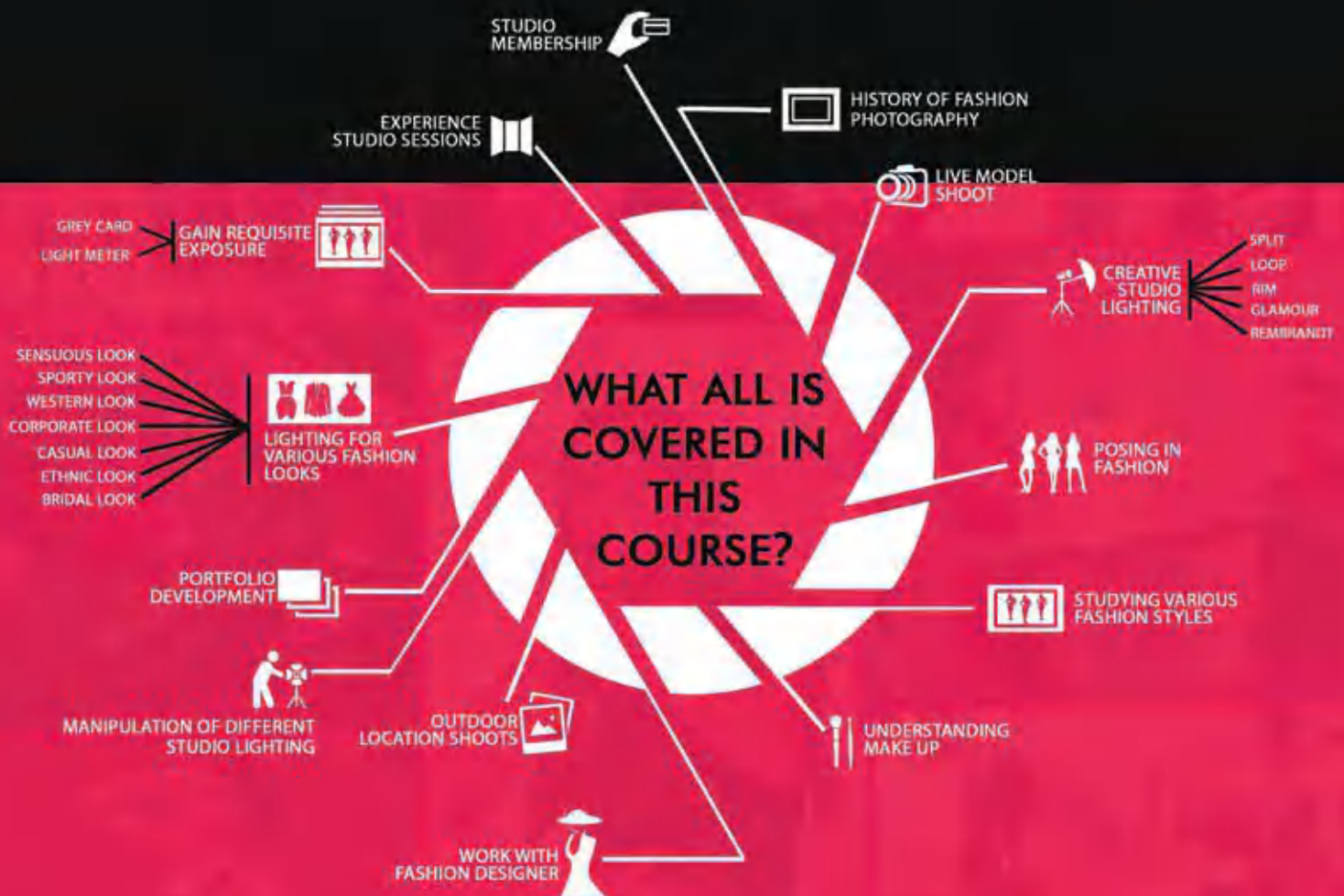
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Our Imaging Expert

No one can take a picture that everyone likes. But, almost every picture can have scope of improvement. Often, we are not our best critics, while others can immediately point out the faults. In If I were you, our expert comments on how your pictures could be taken to another level.

□ Rohinton Mehta,

Technical Editor, Smart Photography

Original



Cannonball Flower

SP reader P. K. Annadurai from Chennai photographed this Cannonball flower during one of his visits to Pune. He wants to know if and how the picture could be improved.

Light tones in a photo always project while dark tones recede. You want the flower to stand out, not the bright background on both sides of the flower!

If I were you, I would have framed the flower using a vertical composition, which would have eliminated the disturbing brightness in the background.

In the edited picture, I cropped out the bright, disturbing areas of the background. But doing so left some area on the left side (see the small pic), which had to be cloned using the darker bark of the tree. The picture was then given a dose of sharpening and a slight increase in contrast.

Camera: Canon EOS 6D; Lens: 50mm
Aperture: F/4; Shutter speed: 1/250sec; ISO: 400

Edited



Original

Camera: Nikon D5200; Lens: 18-55mm kit lens
Aperture: F/22; Shutter speed: 1sec; ISO: 200



Edited

Waterfall

Dibyendu Debnath is a banker by profession. He is fond of natural beauty and photography is his passion and hobby. Dibyendu shot this picture somewhere in north Bengal. He says that the light was dull when he took the picture. He is not satisfied with the photo and wants to know how the picture could be improved.

Dibyendu, 'light' is the most

important element in any picture. The strength of the light, its quality, direction and angle relative to the subject is what makes or breaks a picture. If the light was dull when you shot the photo, the picture is going to be dull! The only way then is to try and artificially improve the picture in an image editing program.

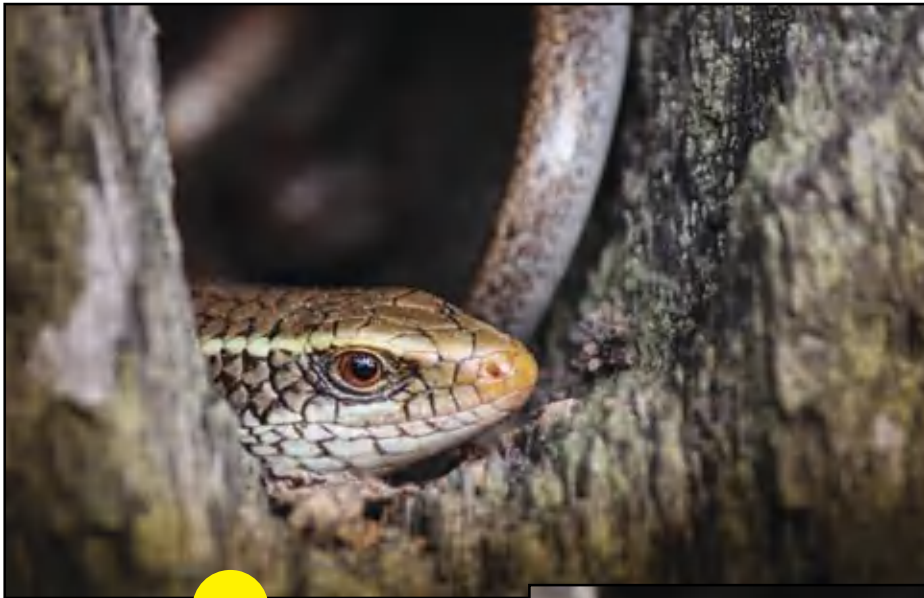
In the edited picture, I got rid of the distracting bamboo (it appears like

bamboo to me) towards the upper right and also toned down the upper right corner. I then increased the contrast and brightness in the water, toned down some highlights which I felt were not helping the picture and sharpened the image. Now there is a definite difference between the original and the edited image, though not as much as I would have liked. Once again I will say that Photoshop is not a magic wand!

IF I WERE YOU

E-mail your images at sp@nextgenpublishing.net

Note: If I Were You is meant to encourage and guide readers, and help them improve their photography. Please ensure that the required camera/exposure details are sent to us (or are available in the EXIF data). We shall not accept images for this section if the required data is not available. Readers are requested to send their images at 300ppi for 8 x 10-inch size. If they are too small, working on them is difficult, and hence they may be rejected.



Camera: Canon EOS 600D;
Lens: 55-250mm
Aperture: F/6.3;
Shutter speed: 1/320sec; ISO: 2000

Original

Edited



Skink

This photo has been sent to us by Sunder Sam through email. Since there was no mention of what the picture is for, I assume Sunder wanted me to critique the picture.

The subject is interesting. Since the subject was in low light, Sunder has done well in selecting a high ISO, which also allowed him a reasonably fast shutter speed to avoid camera movement during exposure.

Though opinions may differ, I personally do not like any fuzzy areas in front of the main subject; I find that disturbing. I also notice what appears to be a part of a tail, adjacent to the skink. I find that too, disturbing. It is possible that there could have been another skink above, whose tail we see in the original

picture. I also notice some highlights in the dark area behind the critter, which somewhat draws my attention away from the main subject.

So, what would I have done if *I were you*? I think I would have tried using a narrower aperture which could have reduced some fuzziness in the foreground, though that would have reduced the shutter speed and increased the chances for camera movement during the exposure.

Also, I would have used a shorter

focal length on the zoom lens, may be around 180mm instead of 250mm. Though that would have resulted in a smaller image on the camera sensor, the depth of field would have been greater, possibly reducing the amount of blur in the foreground.

In the edited image, I have cropped the image. The subject now stands out better. I also toned down the out of focus areas and cloned out the disturbing tail. A naturalist may not like the idea of getting rid of the tail, but I am looking at it from a different angle! **|SP**



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Ask Uncle Ronnie



Is Canon EOS 60D 'noisy'?

I am using a Canon 60D for the last 1.5 years. Using the 60D at ISO 640 (and above) is showing a good amount of noise. Is my 60D not capable of doing high ISO shots? Or what might be the problem? I'm using the kit lens 18-135mm IS STM.

Aravind V.S, via email

After receiving Aravind's email, I requested him to send us few images taken with the Canon EOS 60D that he considers noisy. Those images range from ISO 500 to ISO 1250.

In my opinion, all the images we received are usable. Yes, I do see noise in all of them but the question is, is the noise at acceptable level or is the noise unacceptable? While what is acceptable and what is not is also subjective and varies from person to

person, we must realise that noise is a part and parcel of all digital images. Underexposed areas (dark shirts, dark faces, dark backgrounds) have little or no detail (lack of image information/data) and hence will always show noise, irrespective of the ISO used (and higher ISO images will of course show more noise).

Another point to consider is the enlargement factor. If you try to look for noise at higher enlargements (say 50%, 100%) you will notice more noise; the same image at 'normal' viewing size may show very little to no noise.

Also consider this. An image that appears noisy on the computer monitor, will exhibit lesser noise when printed. The type of printing (commercial lab printing, inkjet

printing, magazine printing) will all show different amount of noise. The texture of the printing paper (glossy, matt, canvas) is also important; glossy prints will show more noise, canvas, the least.

Finally, do bear in mind that the EOS 60D was introduced around mid-2010. It would not be fair to compare 5-year old technology with the current technology.

A Query on Nikon's 200-500mm lens

I have gone through the review article on the above referenced lens, published in the Nov. issue of SP. Please clarify the following points:

It (the review) says, "Nikon claims that the VR has a 5-stop advantage". It also mentions that "The lens is not very easy to hand-hold for more than a few seconds. You need a very heavy duty tripod....". While using tripod (which, as it appears, in this case, I will need all the time), I have to switch-off the VR! Then what is the use of VR at all? Please tell me

AF-S Nikkor 200-500mm ED VR



Camera: Canon EOS 60D; ISO: 1250



whether I am thinking in the right line.

Swapan Sen, Kolkata

It is recommended to use all heavy lenses on a tripod, though this may not be possible or convenient every time.

If you need to use the lens without a tripod, you should switch the VR to 'ON' to take advantage of the VR feature. But if you are using a tripod, then it is better to switch OFF the VR system, as not doing this could possibly cause extra vibrations.

The VR is useful when you are hand-holding the camera.

Lenses for Wedding Photography

What are the best lenses for wedding photography?

Virag Sharan, Jaipur

There is no clear-cut answer to this question; a lot depends on your style of working. Generally speaking (but not always), lenses in the focal range of 24 -120mm are quite commonly used.

AF-S Nikkor
24-120mm ED VR



Let's take an example: It's a Catholic wedding in a church and the photographer is standing on the church balcony much above the congregation. He could use an ultra-wide-angle lens (say, 20mm) to provide an overall view or he could even use a 70-200mm zoom to get a semi-close-up shot of the bride and the groom. So, the focal length you use could depend on the particular situation.

According to me, what you should also consider is the lens speed. A 'fast' lens (one with a wide maximum aperture) will collect more light and make it easy for the autofocus system to accurately and quickly achieve focus. In most cameras, the central AF point, which

Canon EF 70-200mm f/2.8



is cross-type, gets activated only when a fast lens is used. Hence it makes sense to invest in a fast lens for wedding photography. A fast lens, when used wide open, can also throw the background out of focus, which could isolate the main subject and make him/her stand out. A fast lens can also allow you to take pictures without the use of electronic flash or using just a 'fill-in'.

Longer lenses (in terms of focal length) can let you take photos from a longer distance, without the subject 'posing for the shot'. In a wedding photography shoot, this can be sometimes difficult because someone or the other is likely to get between you and the subject!

Day/Date Stamp Mystery
When I remove the battery from my camera, it stops working but the day/date stamp remains visible? How is this?

Karan V. V., Hyderabad

Most digital cameras have an energy buffer that prevents the day/date stamp from being erased. Some cameras have a small button cell (back-up battery) which does the same work. In case of the later design, the back-up battery may need to be replaced after a certain period.

Tips on Posing
Though I have been doing photography for about three years, I am going to try taking portrait shots for the first time in my life. The lady is my friend's sister and I am afraid I might botch up. Please give me some hints.

Pravin Kumar, Kolhapur

Pravin, there's always a first time for everything. Think positively that you will succeed.

Since explaining how to take portraits would be beyond the scope of this write-up, I suggest that you take the help of the Internet and study some simple lighting techniques using available light and simple reflectors. Also check out

how the model should pose. This will give you some courage to face the situation.

- It is important that you display confidence or else you will pass on the negative energy to the model. Your body language is important. If you show lack of confidence, she might think that she is wasting her time. Even if you do something wrong (like setting the reflector at a wrong angle), don't let her see you being nervous. Being positive will boost your confidence level.
- Just to keep your mind at ease, realise that the lady could also be aware that you are new to taking portraits (her brother may have mentioned this to her); If I were you, I would tell her something like this... "Thank you for agreeing to pose for me. You know, I am a beginner in this genre and I am grateful to you for helping me out. I appreciate your help". With a statement such as this, she will be mentally prepared in case the pictures don't turn out the way they should.

(But this does not absolve you for not doing your homework to study how to go about the shoot).

Here are a couple of pointers from me:

- Two or three days before the shoot, scout around for a good location – a rustic village for example. It would help if you could involve a village elder to accompany you at the time of the shoot. With the village elder beside you, you are likely to have a better reception from the others in the village. Pose your subject near or in front of a home, at the entrance steps, next to a tree, in front of a decorative old painting (many villages have homes with nice paintings at the entrance) or any other location that seems comfy to you.

- Your subject need not be in bright sunlight at all times. Bright shade would do for a start. Then change the location – bring her in sunlight. We know that frontal lighting does not fare well as the lighting is 'flat', but

keep in mind that the same frontal lighting is good for bringing out vibrant colours in her dress!

- Pose her so that the frontal sunlight falls on her face at around 60° angle. This would create a small shadow under her nose. This type of lighting is known as 'butterfly lighting' (also known as 'glamour lighting'). Make sure that the nose shadow does not touch or cross the lip line and that there is a catch-light in both her eyes.
- Next, pose her so that she is backlit with the sun. Her face will be in a shadow. Use a white reflector (a 1 x 1.5meter Thermocol would do) to reflect some light back on her face.
- Try side-lighting. Let the sunlight hit her face from one side (it would be better if the light is falling on her face at an angle). Place the reflector on the shade side of her face. Vary the reflector-to-face distance between shots. This will provide different strengths of fill-in light.
- Take many frames.

It is important that the model feels comfortable with you (and your assistants, if any). Her expressions will tell you if she is, or not. Always be polite, even if she is not able to pose as per your directions. Most ladies have a flair for posing, so for a few shots, let her pose the way she likes. Do nothing that will annoy her or discourage her; your duty is to bring out the best in her.

Using Flash Meter

I just bought a second-hand flash meter. It also reads daylight. In a studio situation, should the white dome be pointed at the camera or the studio light or in-between the two?

Avinash Parekh, via email

Generally, an incident light meter is placed at the subject position and aimed at the camera. However, in a single-studio-light lighting, pointing the dome



(the hemisphere) to the studio light can ensure that highlights will not be overexposed; so some photographers prefer this. The exposure difference between these two readings would generally be minimal – say 1/3 to 1/2 stop. By pointing the meter to the camera position, you would get a bit more shadow detail, but in theory at least, you could have a slight overexposure of the highlights. Which method to use is quite personal; you will see the difference and may be use an in-between exposure – which would be equal to pointing the dome in-between the light source and the camera.

When more than one light source is used, I would point the incident light meter to the camera position. |**SP**

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Six shrines of MURUGAN

by R Srinivasan

It is considered auspicious to visit the six shrines or Aarupadaai veedukal of the God of war and love in a single trip.



Akin to the Ashtavinayak temples dedicated to Lord Ganesha in Maharashtra, the six holiest shrines or Aarupadaai veedukal (battle camps) of Lord Murugan - also known as Karthikeya and Skanda - are situated in Tamil Nadu. As per ancient Sangam literature, the six abodes are Tiruttani, Pazhamudircholai, Thirupparankundram, Palani, Thiruchendur and Swamimalai.

The six shrines

Tiruttani

As per the *Skanda Purana*, Lord Murugan got married to Valli here and

he considered it to be his favourite abode. Perched about 700 feet above sea level, it offers a spectacular view of the entire surrounding area. It is said that here Murugan is in a relaxed mood with his two divine consorts, Valli and Devayanai. The hill has 365 steps symbolising the days of the year. The sacred water tank at the foot of the hill, is said to have a curative effect for bodily and mental ailments since it is rich in minerals such as sulphur, iron, etc.

Outside Tiruttani town, we can see for ourselves an architectural marvel at the Arumuga Swami temple. On certain

days in March the rising sun's rays, through an aperture in the wall, seem to worship the deity's feet on one day, then the chest and finally the face.

From Tiruttani, one can also visit Kanchipuram (famous for silk sarees) and Tirupati temple.

How to get there: It is around 85 km from Chennai and about 13 km from Arakkonam near Chennai

Pazhamudircholai

Situated in a beautiful dense forest near the Alagarcoil Vishnu temple,

the shrine's significance could mainly be attributed to the stone vel (spear). Also, fruits of the rose apple tree in the temple courtyard coincidentally ripen during the Skanda Sashti festival. The idol in a standing posture has a single face with four hands and is flanked by consorts, Valli and Devayanai, on both sides. The shrine is said to offer a healthy life bereft of diseases to devotees who visit it.

How to get there: It is about 20 kilometres from Madurai.

Thirupparankundram

As per legend, a demon known as Surapadman troubled the gods. So after Lord Murugan defeated Surapadman, Indra, the king of gods, as a token of gratitude gave his daughter, Devayanai's hand in marriage to Murugan. At the sacred water tank within the temple, it is a joy to feed puffed rice (pori) to the fishes. It is said that the sons of a sage were cursed to become fishes and they waited at the water tank here to catch a glimpse of Lord Murugan, (who was supposed to come here after the slaying of Surapadman) so that they

could be redeemed. Till date, many Tamilians consider the temple, which has been carved out of the rock face, a very auspicious place to get married. Interestingly, a Muslim shrine dedicated to Sikandar, Murugan's friend, is situated on the same hill.

How to get there: It is located about 8 km from Madurai.

Palani

This ancient shrine is situated 1,500 feet above sea level. The name Palani is derived from the words 'Pazham Nee' or 'You are the fruit of wisdom' which were uttered by parents, Lord Shiva and Parvati to pacify an enraged Murugan. Apart from the nearly 700 steps, one can get to the top of the steep hill by means of winch trolleys. It is claimed that this shrine offers the highest income in Tamil Nadu. The significance of the deity called Dandayudhapani - where the staff (danda) is a weapon (ayudha) in his hands (pani) - is that it is made out of nine rare minerals (Navabashanam).

How to get there: It is about 60 km from Dindigul.

About Murugan

Lord Murugan, the son of Lord Shiva, is the god of love and war and the fountain-head of Tamil literature. Like his father Shiva, he is eternally youthful. His very name Murugan as Mu -- Mukundan (Vishnu), Ru -- Rudra (Shiva) and Ka -- Kamalan (Brahma) contain the three divine functions of creation, preservation and destruction. Of his attributes, he has a vel (spear) in his hand, the peacock as his mount and the cock symbol on his war flag. The vel, given by his mother, signifies the power of wisdom. After slaying Surapadman, the Lord converted the two parts of Surapadman in to a peacock and the cock symbol.

As per legend, when the gods asked Lord Shiva to save them from Surapadman, Shiva created Karthikeya, to kill Surapadman, out of a spark that emanated from his third eye. Unable to bear the intensity, Agni (Fire God) dropped him among the river weeds. The scattered sparks became six babies. They were cared for by the six Krittika (hence the name Karthikeya) maidens and the six babies united to become a single beautiful child.

Marriage - Valli and Devayanai were celestial damsels, Sundaravalli and Amudavalli. They performed intense penance to become Murugan's consorts. Pleased, Murugan ordained that Amudavalli would be reborn as Indra's daughter while Sundaravalli would take birth on earth in a hunter tribe and that he would marry both of them. Accordingly, Murugan got married to Devayanai at Tirupparankundram. The name Devayanai is derived from 'Devas' ie the gods and 'Yānai' in Tamil means elephant since she was raised by Indra's divine elephant.

Skanda Sashti Kavacham: It is believed that regular chanting of this ancient hymn, sung in praise of Lord Murugan, can resolve problems of daily life.

Temple	Location
Tiruttani	Near Chennai
Pazhamudircholai	Near Madurai
Thirupparankundram	Near Madurai
Palani	Near Dindigul
Thiruchendur	Thoothukudi - Near Tirunelveli
Swamimalai	Near Kumbakonam

Apart from India, Tamil-speaking people worship Murugan even in Sri Lanka, Singapore, South Africa, Malaysia, Fiji, Australia and America to name a few countries.

Thiruchendur

It is here that Lord Murugan defeated Surapadman. This battle is re-enacted every year with religious fervour during the annual Skanda Sashti festival after Diwali and draws millions of devotees. Significantly, this is the only temple located on the seashore, since his shrines are mostly located amid mountains. Also he does not have his 'Vel' in his hand as he is praying to Lord Shiva for having slain many in battle. There is a fresh water spring located amidst the dunes. It is said that Lord Murugan's Vel had pierced the earth at this spot.

How to get there: The shrine in Thoothukudi district is about 60 km from Tirunelveli.

Swamimalai

After being cursed by a saint for disturbing his penance, Lord Shiva forgot his knowledge and regained it by learning from Lord Murugan here. For teaching his father Shiva ('Swami') the meaning of the Pranava mantra Om, he became known as Swaminātha and 'Malai' in Tamil means mountain.

How to get there: It is about 8 km from Kumbakonam in Tanjore district.

At all these locations in Tamil Nadu, for the convenience of devotees, there are many affordable hotels. Since almost all Murugan temples are situated in hilly terrain, head for these shrines in India that offer a dual benefit - of visiting a divine religious place amidst nature, at its scenic best. **|SP**





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Surreal Beauty

As told to **Sujith Gopinath**



Dibyendu Das

Dibyendu Das is a self-taught photographer from Silchar, Assam. He believes that photography is all about hard work, optimal use of equipment, and the ability to use intellect. He works as a Private Secretary at a central university. He likes to wander alone in the lap of nature and capture mesmerising landscapes. He has regularly participated in various photo salons from across the globe and has received 213 international, 30 national acceptances, and four awards from 20 countries. His images have been published in various print and electronic media.



Golden Hour

© Dibyendu Das



Riot of Colours

© Dibyendu Das

Please tell us about yourself—how were you initiated into photography, and how you pursued it as a serious engagement.

During my student life, I had a good hand in drawing pictures and wanted to learn painting. But that could not materialise due to financial constraints. Later, may be that hidden desire brought me to photography. I started doing photography in 2010



Shades of Gold

© Dibyendu Das

with a point and shoot camera, and used it for about six months. During that time, some of my friends and well-wishers appreciated a few photographs. This made me think that if I had to continue and do it seriously, I must learn photography and practice it in a proper way. I did some study with the help of the Internet, watching video tutorials, and discussing with co-photographers. I purchased my first D-SLR in 2011 with a loan and pursued photography seriously.

What made you choose Landscape as your genre?

I belong to the North Eastern corner of India, which is naturally very beautiful and I was brought up amidst incomparable scenic serenity. This, I feel, is the prime reason to go for landscape. Since my childhood, I have been attracted by the colours of nature. I always observed the beautiful colours and interesting formations of clouds in the sky during autumn. I loved observing pictures of waterfalls, night sky, mountains, rivers, and the blue colour of the sea. All the time, I dreamt to capture them. I love beautiful landscapes. Even when I visit places, not as a photographer, I give



End of Another Day

© Dibyendu Das

preferences to the places, which are naturally rich in flora and fauna. In the beginning, I captured photographs of my liking. But later on, I became comfortable with landscape photography. I could think quietly, observe the place and make my own compositions. I did not have to wait for things to happen. The only thing I have to depend on is the weather, and if it is good, I am sure I can capture good pictures.

A landscape photographer has to be an avid traveller. How do you make plans for backpacking?

Before going on a trip, I gather information from the internet about the place, sometimes from known connections, reading blogs and reviews of others, who have visited the place. I make a rough schedule as to when and where I will shoot during my touring days. I make good use of the new informative mobile applications like Google Map and Google Earth, Sky View, the weather app for sunrise, sunset and so on. I always prefer to go to those places which are less crowded but possess maximum shooting opportunities. I generally plan a tour well in advance. Before a tour, I have to keep a few things in mind such as the prime purpose of visit, types of photographs

I would capture there, the best time to visit a particular place and so on. One has to go to a place at least twice to cover the place to some extent.

Tell us about your kit bag—lenses, filters and other accessories you carry with you.

I work with very simple equipment. The most important thing is to know your

Colours of Nature



Milky Way over the Ruin



equipment well, and now I know how I can get the best out of a particular equipment. But everything has its limits. After a point, one has to upgrade his gears. I am a photographer who never

cries for equipment. I believe I have to work with what is available with me and what I can afford. In my kit, I have a Nikon D90 and a very recently purchased Nikon D7000 body. I am

planning to purchase a full-frame body next month. I use a Nikkor 18-105mm f/3.5-5.6, Tamron 10-24 f/3.5, Nikkor 70-300VR and a Nikkor 50mm f/1.8. I also use Hoya Circular Polarizer, Hitech Graduated ND filters, and rotating ND filter. I generally keep two tripods during tour, one is Vanguard Alta Pro 263AT at with TBH 100 ball head and other one is Vanguard Alta 233AP with pan head. I also keep a head torch, remote, extra batteries, good quality microfibre cloths for cleaning the lenses, good quality blower, a knife and raincoat.

Most of your images have been shot near water bodies and in inclement weather. What special care do you take before, during and after a shoot, in keeping your equipment in perfect condition?

I come from a region where we get abundant rainfall almost every year. All the time I have to prepare myself for the monsoons. Most of the time I go to Sonebeel and Chatla — two famous wetlands — for taking pictures. Before and during a photo shoot, I have to take extra care of my equipment. I always keep a big towel, a few big plastic bags to protect my gears from rain and also to shoot in light drizzle. After returning from the shoot, I dry my gears with an electric hair drier and a 100 Watt bulb. While shooting



seascapes, I need to take more care because a good amount of salt gets deposited on my tripod and camera. If I don't clean my equipment properly, the salt may cause a problem in the future; especially I clean the tripods with normal water so that I can protect them from corrosion. Further, as we live in a place which is very humid, I have to dry up my equipment under the sunlight for 10 to 15 minutes on a routine weekly basis particularly the lenses and cameras, so that I can keep them dry and fungus-free.

Do you have a role model in photography? If so, how has that person influenced you?

I do not have any particular photographer as my role model. I like to see the photograph first before checking who took it. To me, the photograph is more important than the photographer. I see many photographs capture by renowned photographers such as Marc Adamus, Randall Sangar, Daniel Cheong and a few others. I particularly like night photography by Andy Frazer. I am also a big fan of the black and white landscapes of the legendary Ansel Adams. I get inspired by great photographers,

but never try to copy them from any angle. I am confident that I can create good compositions and post-process them in my own way. I love to capture what looks good through my

viewfinder. I believe if one is capable of using his/her brain properly, the image is bound to have a unique composition and no other person's work can match that.

Crushing Waves



Amlympiang Falls, Meghalaya



What role does post-processing play in your work? Which is your favourite post-processing software?

It is a very interesting question and a lot of debate is going around on this

topic whether to post-process or not. In my opinion, post-processing means subtle adjustments in the image such as changes in White Balance, Brightness/Contrast, Burning and Dodging,

bringing out subtle shadow details, cropping and so on. Ansel Adams has said that “Dodging and burning are steps to take care of mistakes God made in establishing tonal relationships”. But a few people try to create an image or you can say make a photograph by manipulation, which I never appreciate. In a single sentence you can say post processing is to make a photograph catch the eye. I firmly believe in the enhancement of an image but never try to create any image.

Post processing is very important because you don't find the picture on your card in the way you saw it with your own eyes. The challenge of good photography is not just to capture as your camera sees it. It is the art of imaging and remembering the special atmosphere that you saw and felt, and then carve it out of your Raw file. The time I spend for processing also varies. Sometimes it takes just 30 minutes and sometimes it takes more than three/four hours. I never add or remove any object in my images other than removing dust bunnies and water spots. I try to put in my best efforts in taking picture in perfect exposure. I try to keep my image



Lonely Waterman

© Dibyendu Das



Rocky Gokarna

© Dibyendu Das

natural and realistic as much as possible. My favourite post-processing software is Adobe Photoshop CS5.

How often do you make prints of your images?

I do make prints of my images regularly. In my four years of photography, I have done a few exhibitions in our state. I made some prints for these exhibitions. I also had to make some prints, which I sold recently. I am a regular participant of photography salons all over the world and therefore I have to print many images.

What is your advice to budding photographers?

If anyone wants to pursue photography seriously, he/she must be very passionate about the art form. You have to love and live the passion. One must have the eagerness to learn from everywhere. Photography is a vast subject and in my opinion, one cannot master it in one life. One has to work hard to become successful. In photography, a few aspects are very important. First, use of the machine, second, composition and framing and to me, another important factor is the capacity to visualise a frame

or a scene. These things cannot be taught. It should come from within. The more you capture pictures and spend time on the field, you will learn how to compose a scene in a better

way. Photography is all about how different is your vision from the others. Anyone cannot be a photographer by purchasing a D-SLR and clicking pictures. |SP



Tyrshi Falls, Meghalaya

© Dibyendu Das



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Cathedral of Christ the Saviour

A 'Monumental' Visit to MOSCOW

Canon India had provided me with a 5D-SR body and an EF 11-24mm f/4.0 USM lens for review during my Moscow visit. If it were not for these pieces of equipment, I would surely not have managed to capture the stunning images you will see in this feature. I am thankful to the camera giant for their generosity!



Ajay Sood (Travelure)
Canon Photo Mentor

Ajay Sood (Travelure) is an accomplished travel photographer and a travelogue writer. His sole objective is to make the destinations he covers desirable. He has been profiled as Mastercraftsman in *Smart Photography* (May 2012). He was on the jury of Canon

Photomathon in 2012 and has been nominated yet again in 2015. He is also an assignment photographer for National Geographic Traveller.

He is a Canon Photo Mentor. Besides mentoring photography workshops, he leads photo-tours and contributes travelogues and features to various publications. He has a passion for capturing the sights, sounds and stories of places he visits. He has travelled across India extensively and to over 25 countries across the globe.

His 27 years in the communication industry have been his training ground, leading to his deep understanding of the visual medium, reflected in his unique compositions. More of his work may be seen at www.travelure.in. 'Winner of Grab Your Dream Season 2' photo contest organised by Cox & Kings and EzeeGo.



I travelled to Moscow with some trepidation. Knowledgeable folks had told me that language was a big issue - not many understand English there. Despite this, I took the plunge and travelled. Thanks to a friend's contact in the Indian Embassy, I got a cab driver who could manage some English. Well, not really. But he was eager to help and he had a Wi-Fi router in the cab that turned out to be a blessing - both of us were able to communicate through a phone app that could translate English to Russian and vice versa.

Upon landing at Sheremetyavo Airport in Moscow and after facing the customary once-over by the passport control, I made my way towards the baggage carousel. To my utter surprise, there was no 'duty-free' store at the Airport. Upon inquiring, I was told that the 'duty free' store is only at the airport departures!

As I made my way to the hotel, I felt a certain lack of character that most other cities normally exude. Over the next couple of days, this first impression was totally, comprehensively and permanently changed.

I started my sojourn the following

morning with the capital of Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. My first stop was Red Square - a globally famous city square. The sky was overcast. So, while I shot some images, I made a mental note that I needed to visit this location again during my short stay. Sergei, my young cabby, pointed out that it would be better if I visited again in the evening. And that is what I did the following evening.

This remarkable landmark is 330x70 metres in area. It is surrounded by five heritage marvels - Gum Departmental Store in the North-East, State Historical Museum in its North West, Kremlin's Outer Wall in the South West with Lenin's Mausoleum projecting out from the middle of this wall and St. Basil's Cathedral at the South East corner. While we may be more familiar with the onion domes of St. Basil's Cathedral, I found the State Historical Museum and Gum Departmental Store to be true architectural gems. Gum, for instance, has an intricate façade that extends an unbelievable 242 metres in length, while the museum's brickwork is brilliance personified.

From here, I proceeded towards an imposing Orthodox Christian church - Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. It is scenically located at the northern

Kremlin Wall, Red Square - Structure in the middle is Lenin's Mausoleum





242-Metre long facade of Gum Departmental Store at Red Square



Moscow Metro Station



Russia's Symbol at VDNKh Entrance



State Museum

bank of River Moscow. It is the tallest Orthodox Christian church in the world - standing tall at a neck-craning 103 metres. En route, I made a few stops to capture some more stunning structures lying across the entire length and breadth of Moscow.

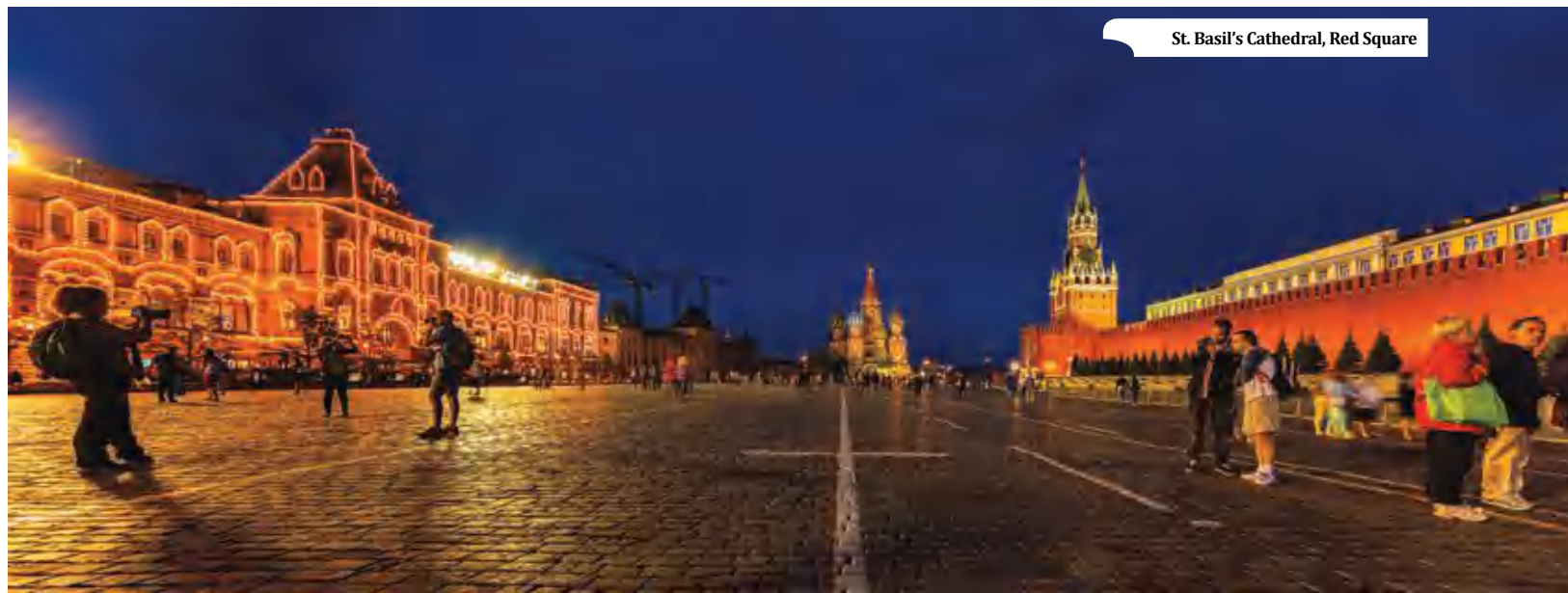
Next stop - Moscow University. Its building not only has 6 other look-alikes in Moscow (one of them being the office block of Russia's Ministry of External Affairs), but it has an uncanny resemblance to the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw. Sergei mentioned that this similarity might be attributed to the fact that Stalin was instrumental in commissioning all of these. Its stunning design and captivating locale attract Moscow-ites for their cherished photo-ops — be it candid pre-wedding shoots or celebratory videos commissioned by a spouse to surprise his/her partner.

Monument to the Conquerors of Space



VDNKh Entrance





Commercial Buildings along the banks of River Moscow

After a short visit to Victory Park and Triumphal Arch, I called it a day over a chilled glass of beer at the Hard Rock Café situated on a historical pedestrian avenue called Arbat Street. Interestingly, here I had a chance-encounter with dancing Russian devotees of

ISKCON. Though I had no intention to cover any more landmarks that day, I swung by Red Square again and on my way back to the hotel, I could not resist capturing a stunning blue hour image of Bolshoi Auditorium – the home ground of the world-famous Bolshoi Ballet Troupe.

Next day took me around the underground Moscow. No, I am not talking about the crime-spewing dark underbelly that characterises all large cities, but I am referring to the palatial Metro Stations of Moscow's Metro network. Stalin had envisioned these as palaces for the proletariat. Some of



Moscow University - A couple posing for their pre-wedding candids



Bolshoi Auditorium

Inside VDNKh



Tsaritsyno Park



Famous onion domes of St Basil's Cathedral at Red Square



Sunset at Red Square



Red Square as seen from a bridge over River Moscow





ISKCON devotees at Arbat Street



Church of the Theotokos icon - Joy of all who Sorrow - at the MONIKI-Research Institute Hospital

these are akin to larger than life art galleries and are surely an envy of many-a-museum across the globe. What is even more remarkable is the fact that these were constructed in mid-1930s - the period between the two World Wars. The deepest station is 84 metres beneath the ground. The reason for building them so deep was that they were to double up as nuclear shelters in the event of a nuclear war. I spent 4 hours moving from one Metro station to the next - all with just one ticket that cost me 50 Rubles (approx. 80 US Cents).

I made a stop at the 110-metre tall Monument to the Conquerors of Space that is made entirely of Titanium! From there, I reached VDNKh - a permanent exhibition site that may be called Moscow's equivalent of New Delhi's Pragati Maidan. The place is popular amongst the local Moscow crowd as the structures blend beautifully with the landscape. The area is large enough to offer privacy to the thronging

multitude and has places that cater to their food and entertainment needs. It sprawls over an area of 2,375,000 square metres!

Another similar vast leisure space in Moscow is the Tsaritsyno Park. The place takes your breath away with its beauty and leaves you short of breath when you walk around its vast expanse. After this, I made one final visit to the Red Square in the evening. This visit resulted in some idyllic blue hour shots.

Before rushing off to the airport next morning, I stopped by at Kremlin. There are only two words that describe the monuments and churches scattered over Kremlin's outspread grounds - Gigantic Opulence. While being driven to the airport, I was smiling at my initial thought of Moscow lacking character. I also silently wondered about how many times I would have crossed the lovely river, Moskva, through its many different bridges during this short, two and a half day trip. I also wished my trip was a little longer! I conclude with an earnest request to the heritage and architecture loving photophiles to add this magnificent city to their personal must-visit bucket-list. |SP

Shahi Snan



Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark III; Lens: EF 24-70mm f/4 IS USM
Aperture: F/8; Shutter speed: 25sec; ISO: 100

KUMBHMELA: The Other Side

As told to **Disha Khemchandani**



Ashish Langade

Ashish Langade is a Pune/Bengaluru-based photographer. A Canon boy from day one, he has been doing photography professionally since the last 4 years. His genres are weddings, pre-wedding shoots, baby/newborn shoots, portfolios, landscapes, portraits and a lot more. With photography, he explores new horizons in life. He finds inspiration in Guru Charan's work. Recently, he started experimenting with Astrophotography. The experience has been full of bliss. Pursuing photography was not a planned decision for him. It just happened to be one of the most beautiful turns that life took! His work can be seen at www.ashishlangade.com

Kumbhmela is like a rainbow, with so many people from various parts of India gathering there. The event, which has many colourful shades to it, is a bliss for photographers. There are various other beautiful sides to Kumbhmela, but they are quite often hidden or untold.

I was bored of all those clichéd sadhu baba photos of Nashik Kumbhmela. I needed something different. I wanted to see and shoot photos beyond sadhu babas and their poses.

I was there for just two days. I tried to stay away from the routine that almost everyone follows. I tried to photograph something, which would be totally different from what other photographers do. This approach led me to shoot from a different perspective, and this album is my attempt to bring out those moments, stories and smiles which go unnoticed by most of us.



Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark III; Lens: Tokina 10-17mm fisheye
Aperture: F/8; Shutter speed: 1/125sec; ISO: 50



The Kumbathon...



Perspective

Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark III; Lens: Tokina 10-17mm fisheye
Aperture: F/8; Shutter speed: 1/200sec; ISO: 50

Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark III; Lens: EF 85mm f/1.8 USM
Aperture: F/1.8; Shutter speed: 1/400sec; ISO: 100

The Holy Messenger



Baba stick



Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark III;
Lens: EF 85mm f/1.8 USM
Aperture: F/2;
Shutter speed: 1/2000sec; ISO: 50

In trance.



Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark III; Lens: Tokina 16-28mm f/2.8 Ultra wide angle lens
Aperture: F/2.8; Shutter speed: 1/4000sec; ISO: 3200

Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark III; Lens: Tokina 16-28mm f/2.8 Ultra wide angle lens
Aperture: F/8; Shutter speed: 1/125sec; ISO: 500



Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark III; Lens: Tokina 10-17mm fisheye lens
Aperture: F/9; Shutter speed: 1/1600sec; ISO: 800

The field of action...



Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark III; Lens: EF 85mm f/1.8 USM
Aperture: F/2; Shutter speed: 1/250sec; ISO: 2000

Life hurts. More Tea?

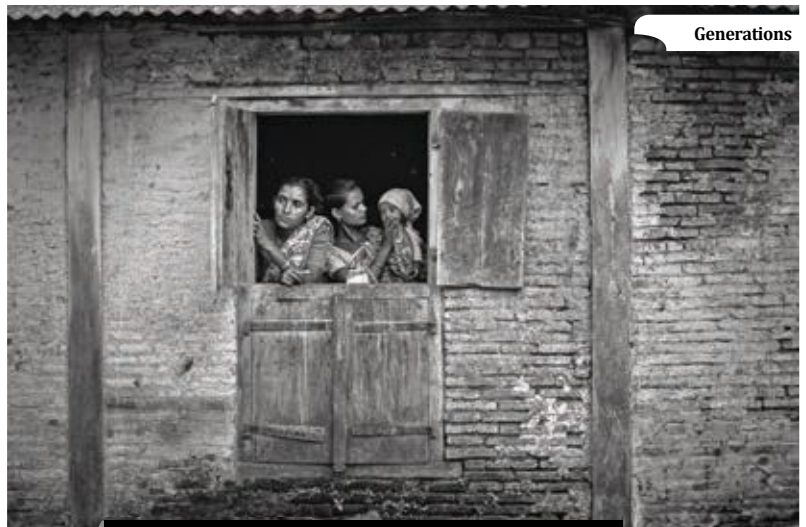


Daily conversations



Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark III;
Lens: Tokina 10-17mm fisheye lens
Aperture: F/6;
Shutter speed: 1/50sec; ISO: 500

Generations



Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark III; Lens: EF 85mm f/1.8 USM
Aperture: F/2; Shutter speed: 1/500sec; ISO: 500

Happy childhood



Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark III;
Lens: EF 85mm f/1.8 USM
Aperture: F/2;
Shutter speed: 1/160sec; **ISO:** 320

Eye-reaching smile



Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark III;
Lens: EF 85mm f/1.8 USM
Aperture: F/4.5;
Shutter speed: 1/500sec; **ISO:** 50

'Cat' you

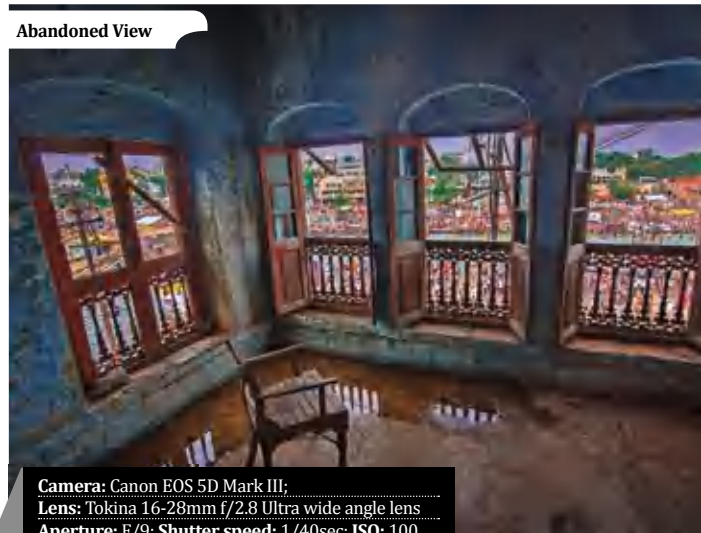


Suspicion



Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark III;
Lens: EF 85mm f/1.8 USM
Aperture: F/4.5;
Shutter speed: 1/500sec; **ISO:** 50

Abandoned View



Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark III;
Lens: Tokina 16-28mm f/2.8 Ultra wide angle lens
Aperture: F/9; **Shutter speed:** 1/40sec; **ISO:** 100

Devotion



EXIF data not available

Hues of life



Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark III;
Lens: Tokina 10-17mm fisheye lens
Aperture: F/22;
Shutter speed: 0.8sec; **ISO:** 50

Choosing the right gear while travelling always makes sense. I carried a Canon EOS 5D Mark III body along with the following lenses: Canon 85mm f/1.8, Canon 24-70mm f/4 L, Tokina 16-28mm f/2.8 and 10-17mm fisheye.

idea did not impress me at all. So I started walking in the narrow lanes of Trimbakeshwar to take pictures of the surroundings from different perspectives. It started raining heavily and this made it really difficult to get



Ups and downs

Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark III;
Lens: Tokina 10-17mm fisheye lens
Aperture: F/8;
Shutter speed: 1/250sec; **ISO:** 500

I did not carry my 70-200mm f/2.8 because of its weight. I also wanted more of wide-angle shots. On the first day, I went to Trimbakeshwar where I met some other photographers and the talk was mostly around shooting 'nanga babas' at the time of 'Shahi Snan'. The

good shots. So the next day I returned to Nashik and tried to re-take the shots that I had missed. I also used a fisheye lens to create some great effects, and at the same time, I also used a Neutral Density filter for long exposures. |SP

Touch me if you can - Trinket snake (non-venomous)



Bliss in WILDERNESS

As told to **Disha Khemchandani**

Camera: Canon EOS 7D; Lens: EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS USM
Aperture: F/8; Shutter speed: 1/1000sec; ISO: 320

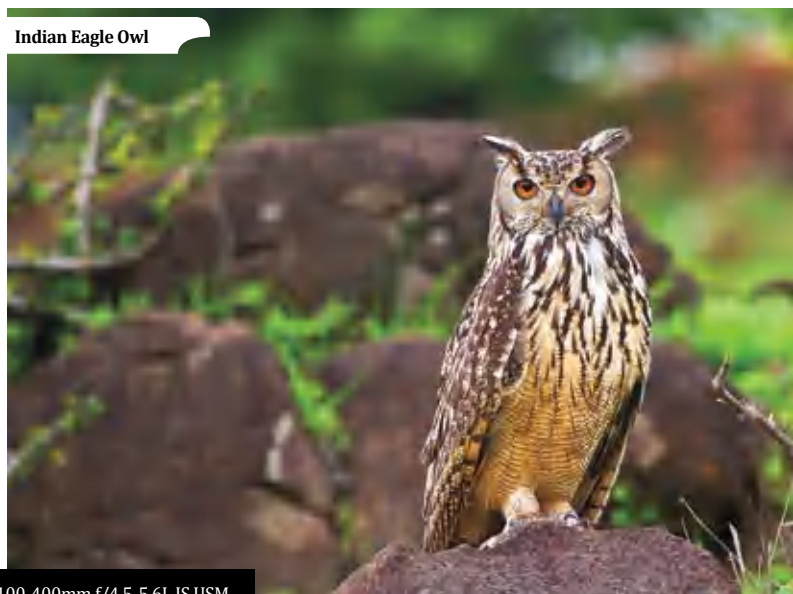


Prasad Navale

Prasad Navale – based in Pune – works with an automobile MNC. It all started 5 years ago, when he visited Ranthambore & Tadoba Tiger Reserves back to back. The divine experience of the pristine forest and the sighting of big cats ignited an interest towards Indian forests & wild-life.

Over the next few years, this interest transformed into an ever growing passion for wildlife photography. His best friends, Vishal Mane and Shreyas Yadav constantly motivated him. Prasad pursues photography for the joy of exploring, love of experiencing the interesting behaviour of the wildlife and with an objective to conserve nature.

Indian Eagle Owl



Camera: Canon EOS 7D; Lens: EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS USM
Aperture: F/5.6; Shutter speed: 1/640sec; ISO: 400

Camera: Canon EOS 7D; Lens: EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS USM
Aperture: F/5.6; Shutter speed: 1/400sec; ISO: 320

On high alert - Spotted owlet giving its signature stare



Bramhiny Kite



Camera: Canon EOS 7D; Lens: EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS USM
Aperture: F/6.3; Shutter speed: 1/2000sec; ISO: 250

Camera: Canon EOS 7D; Lens: EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS USM
Aperture: F/5.6; Shutter speed: 1/125sec; ISO: 500

Curiosity! - Indian fox in its typical habitat



6 month old cub yawning



Camera: Canon EOS 7D; Lens: EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS USM
Aperture: F/6.3; Shutter speed: 1/50sec; ISO: 400

Camera: Canon EOS 7D; **Lens:** EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS USM
Aperture: F/10; **Shutter speed:** 1/500sec; **ISO:** 200

Moments before take-off : Bar headed geese



One who does not touch the earth : Malabar Giant Squirrel, state animal of Maharashtra



Camera: Canon EOS 7D; **Lens:** EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS USM
Aperture: F/5.6; **Shutter speed:** 1/1000sec; **ISO:** 640



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SMART TRAVEL

C O N T E S T

Kanyakumari:

Nature in all its beauty!



Saritha Dattatreya

Saritha Dattatreya has a full-time job with a reputed education company. When it comes to photography, her first love and expertise lies in creative macro and nature images. She also enjoys photographing images of food, abstracts, travel and different dimensions of street life. She is associated with DCP Workshops and Expeditions as a Panel Expert. She conducts workshops on basic & advanced photography and digital image processing. Saritha is also a mentor to photographers at experimental workshops on long exposure techniques, silhouettes, highlights, shadows and various other themes. She intensely relishes every moment by integrating this form of art into her daily life.

Located at the southernmost tip of the Indian subcontinent, Kanyakumari is surrounded by the coast, magnificent hills, temples, churches and other structures. Formerly known as Cape Comorin, Kanyakumari is situated in Tamil Nadu. The name Kanyakumari comes from Devi Kanya Kumari temple. Until the end of the British rule in 1947, Kanyakumari was under the rule of the Pandyan kings and kings of Travancore at a later stage. The borders surrounding the district are the Arabian Sea, Indian ocean, Gulf of Mannar, Tirunelveli and Kerala. It is located at the confluence of the Western and Eastern coastal plains at the tip of the country, where the Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea meet.

The nearest airports to reach Kanyakumari are the Trivandrum International and Tuticorin. These airports are located at a distance of about 85 kms from Kanyakumari. It is very easy to find a taxi from the airport to reach Kanyakumari. There are plenty of buses running from Bangalore, Chennai and Trivandrum to Kanyakumari. Trivandrum Central is the nearest railway station. It is well connected to almost all the cities in India. It is easy to find a taxi or another train to Kanyakumari junction.

Tamil and Malayalam are the main languages spoken in this district. The best time to visit Kanyakumari is from October to March. There are many hotels, in all price ranges, for the stay. For shopping in Kanyakumari, many decorative items



and jewellery made from sea shells, handicrafts made of bamboo, cane and wood are sold at the stalls by the local people near the beach area.

When it comes to food, rice is the staple diet; for mountainous regions, Tapioca is the main food. A wide variety of sea food is prepared and sold. People use coconuts as a major ingredient in curries and other food items. There are many eat-outs and restaurants in Kanyakumari for vegetarians, non-vegetarians, natives as well as international tourists.

For photography, Kanyakumari is one of the most precious few places to shoot some spectacular and stunning colours of nature. It offers an opportunity to take dramatic and inspiring sunrise and

sunset images along with silhouettes. The best hours to take seascape and skyscape images are early in the morning from 5:00 a.m. to 6:30 a.m. and in the evening at about 6:00 p.m. Photographers can experiment with long exposure technique and the exposure bracketing option to make creative images. Any camera will do. Wide-angle lenses are preferable. Graduated ND filters would bring out the best of colours, though their use is optional. It is a must to carry a tripod to get better quality images as the photographer will be taking pictures in low-light conditions.

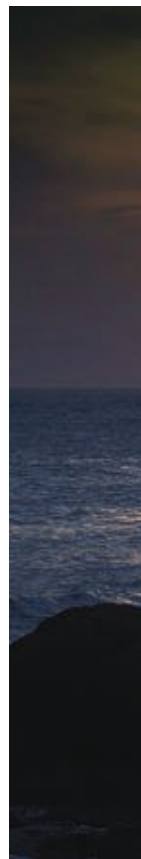
Places Of Interest: Kanyakumari Beach

Kanyakumari is one of the very few

places in the country where one can watch a sunrise and sunset sitting at the same spot near the famous Kumari Amman temple. The beach has a rocky shoreline with different hues of sand. The lighthouse near the beach gives a breathtaking view of the beautiful sky.

Vivekananda Memorial Rock

The major attraction of Kanyakumari is the Thiruvalluvar statue. It is constructed with granite blocks on a rock formation that has cropped out of the sea at a distance of about 500m away from the mainland. The rock is considered to be a sacred place. It was known as 'Sripada Parai', which means that the rock is blessed by the





touch of 'Devi Kumari'. Swamy Vivekananda meditated at this spot during his visit to Kanyakumari.

Kanyakumari Temple

This is a temple dedicated to Goddess Kanyakumari – the incarnation of Parvati. The Shiva.Kumari Amman temple is also famous for the Goddess adorned with the sparkling diamond nose ring that is believed to be guiding the fishermen and sailing ships.

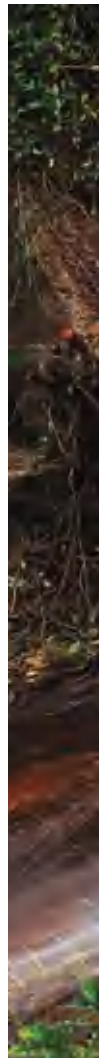
There are more than 20 interesting places around Kanyakumari. It takes at least 3-4 days to cover them like the Fountain at Kanniyakumari, Mahatma Gandhi Memorial, Thiruvalluvar Statue, Kumarajar manimandapam, View Tower and Telescope House, Government museum, Gunganathaswamy Temple, Kumari - Hall of history, Suchindram, Kanyakumari Bagavathiamman Temple, Udayagiri Fort, Mathoor Hanging Bridge, St. Xavier Church, Padmanabhapuram Palace, Pechiparai Dam, Tirparappu Water Falls, Peer Mohammed Durga, Muttom Beach, Maruthuva Malai, Bay Watch, Mukkadal, Chothavilai Beach and Vattakottai Circular Fort.

So, what are you waiting for? Pack your bags and explore Kanyakumari! **|SP**



Valparai:

It's time to explore nature!



Who says that there is no heaven on earth? The most beautiful scenery with gorgeous waterfalls, forests, mountain ranges, rain, flora and fauna, estates and every form of wonder can be found in a place called Valparai. This beautiful place in nature has scenery that can take you away from the manmade world and leave its pleasant impress upon your soul. It is a perfect place to trek, relax, rejuvenate, feel the freshness and comfort of nature enveloped with lush green teas estates all over.

Valparai is a beautiful hill station located 3,500 feet above the sea level on the Anaimalai Hills (Mountain of elephants) range of the Western Ghats, in Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu. There are 40 hairpin bends on the way up to Valparai from Azhiyar. In 1890, Mr. Nordan and Mr. Wintil bought a bigger portion of land in Valparai from the State Government. They deforested the area and planted tea and coffee. Valparai is rich in vast areas of tea and coffee plantations with thick reserve forests. The major portion of the land



Saritha Dattatreya

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is owned by private tea companies like Tata Tea Estates, Parry Agro, N.E.P.C and many more. Most people living in Valparai work at these estates.

The nearest airport to Valparai is in Coimbatore. Pollachi and Coimbatore are the nearest railway stations. Coimbatore is connected with all major cities of the country. Valparai can be reached by cars and buses

from Pollachi, Palakkad, Coimbatore, which are at a distance of 65 km, 43 km and 100 km approximately. Tamil is spoken in Valparai. The local people can communicate in Hindi and English too with the tourists. Valparai has a good range of hotels, resorts and guest houses for accommodation. Restaurants serve different cuisines. One can also find bakeries offering wide range of eatables like biscuits and other delicacies.

This place is a paradise for Nature photographers. It is one of the best places for wildlife and nature photography. There are plenty of options for photographers to capture waterfalls, macro subjects, mountains, birds and other wide variety of wildlife. Photographers can carry any camera with wide angle, standard zoom and macro lenses. ND filter is preferable to get better landscape

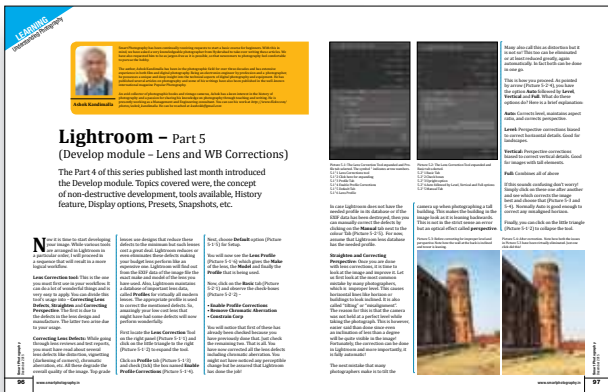


images and tripod for better quality images. It is a perfect place for photographers to shoot waterfalls on long exposure technique and wonderful panoramic landscape images.

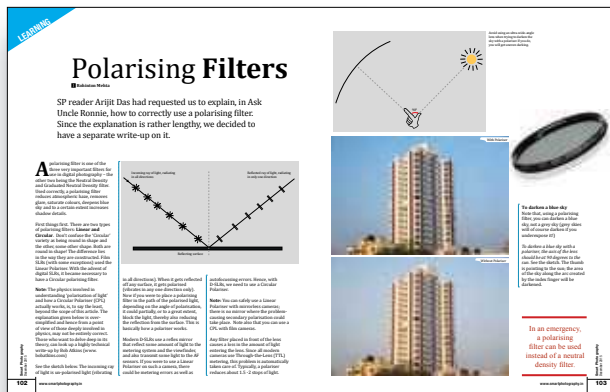
Valparai is a habitat for many elephants, Nilgiri Tahr, leopards and boars, gaur, spotted deer, sambar, gaint squirrels and different species of birds. On the way to this place, one can see many monkeys. Valparai receives heavy rainfall during the monsoons around June, July and August.

Hill stations like Ooty, Kodaikanal, Yercaud and Munnar are at a 5 hours driving distance from Valparai. A visit to Valparai can be clubbed with these hill stations during your vacation. Some of the must-see places in Valparai are Aaliyar Dam, Monkey Falls, Solayar Dam, Balaji Temple, Chinnakallar Dam, Nallamudi Poonjolai, Athirapilly waterfalls etc.

Get away from the hustle-bustle of the city. Soak in the beauty of nature. Visit Valparai! | **SP**



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7 Must-Know Bird Photography Tips for Beginners

Learnings



Ashok Kandimalla

Smart Photography has been continually receiving requests to start a basic course for beginners. With this in mind, we have asked a very knowledgeable photographer from Hyderabad to take over writing these articles. We have also requested him to be as jargon-free as it is possible, so that newcomers to photography feel comfortable to pursue the hobby.

The author, Ashok Kandimalla has been in the photographic field for over three decades and has extensive experience in both film and digital photography. Being an electronics engineer by profession and a photographer, he possesses a unique and deep insight into the technical aspects of digital photography and equipment. He has published several articles on photography and some of his writings have also been published in the well-known international magazine Popular Photography.

An avid collector of photographic books and vintage cameras, Ashok has a keen interest in the history of photography and a passion for sharing his knowledge on photography through teaching and writing. He is presently working as a Management and Engineering consultant. You can see his work at http://www.flickr.com/photos/ashok_kandimalla. He can be reached at kashokk@gmail.com

Lightroom – Part 5

(Develop module – Lens and WB Corrections)

The Part 4 of this series published last month introduced the Develop module. Topics covered were, the concept of non-destructive development, tools available, History feature, Display options, Presets, Snapshots, etc.

Now it is time to start developing your image. While various tools are arranged in Lightroom in a particular order, I will proceed in a sequence that will result in a more logical workflow.

Lens Correction tool: This is the one you must first use in your workflow. It can do a lot of wonderful things and is very easy to apply. You can divide this tool's usage into – **Correcting Lens Defects, Straighten** and **Correcting Perspective**. The first is due to the defects in the lens design and manufacture. The latter two arise due to your usage.

Correcting Lens Defects: While going through lens reviews and test reports, you must have read about several lens defects like distortion, vignetting (darkening of corners), chromatic aberration, etc. All these degrade the overall quality of the image. Top grade

lenses use designs that reduce these defects to the minimum but such lenses cost a great deal. Lightroom reduces or even eliminates these defects making your budget lens perform like an expensive one. Lightroom will find out from the EXIF data of the image file the exact make and model of the lens you have used. Also, Lightroom maintains a database of important lens data, called **Profiles** for virtually all modern lenses. The appropriate profile is used to correct the mentioned defects. So, amazingly your low cost lens that might have had some defects will now perform wonderfully.

First locate the **Lens Correction** Tool on the right panel (Picture 5-1¹) and click on the little triangle to the right (Picture 5-1²) to expand the tool.

Click on **Profile** tab (Picture 5-1³) and check (tick) the box named **Enable Profile Corrections** (Picture 5-1⁴).

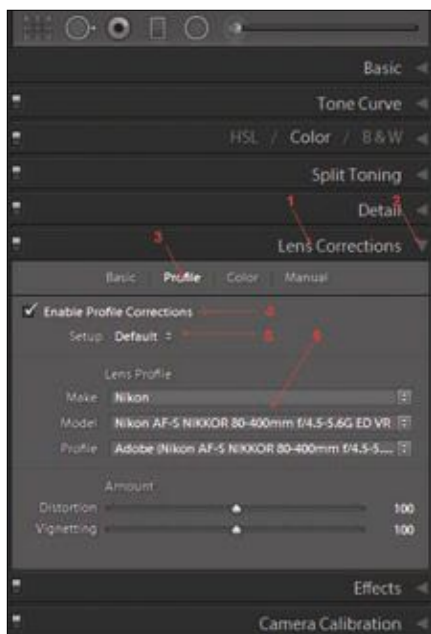
Next, choose **Default** option (Picture 5-1⁵) for Setup.

You will now see the **Lens Profile** (Picture 5-1⁶) which gives the **Make** of the lens, the **Model** and finally the **Profile** that is being used.

Now, click on the **Basic** tab (Picture 5-2¹) and observe the check-boxes (Picture 5-2²) –

- **Enable Profile Corrections**
- **Remove Chromatic Aberration**
- **Constrain Crop**

You will notice that first of these has already been checked because you have previously done that. Just check the remaining two. That is all. You have now corrected all the lens defects including chromatic aberration. You might not have noticed any perceptible change but be assured that Lightroom has done the job!



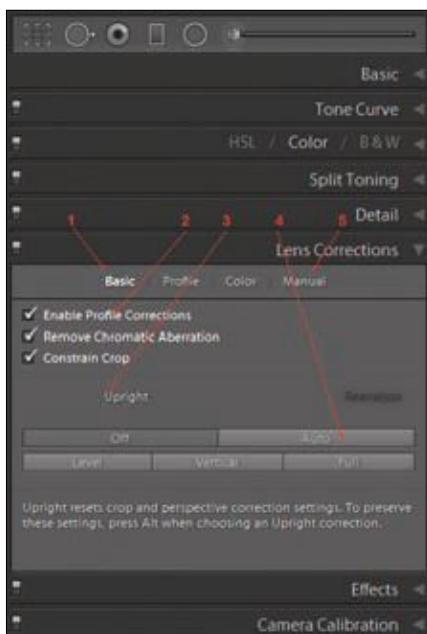
Picture 5-1: The Lens Correction Tool expanded and Profile tab selected. The symbol ⁺ indicates arrow numbers.
 5-1¹ Lens Corrections tool
 5-1² Click here for expanding
 5-1³ Profile Tab
 5-1⁴ Enable Profile Corrections
 5-1⁵ Default Tab
 5-1⁶ Lens Profile

In case Lightroom does not have the needed profile in its database or if the EXIF data has been destroyed, then you can manually correct the defects by clicking on the **Manual** tab next to the colour Tab (Picture 5-2⁵). For now, assume that Lightroom lens database has the needed profile.

Straighten and Correcting

Perspective: Once you are done with lens corrections, it is time to look at the image and improve it. Let us first look at the most common mistake by many photographers, which is improper level. This causes horizontal lines like horizon or buildings to look inclined. It is also called “tilting” or “misalignment”. The reason for this is that the camera was not held at a perfect level while taking the photograph. This is however, easier said than done since even an inclination of less than a degree will be quite visible in the image! Fortunately, the correction can be done in Lightroom and more importantly, it is fully automatic!

The next mistake that many photographers make is to tilt the



Picture 5-2: The Lens Correction Tool expanded and Basic tab selected.
 5-2¹ Basic Tab
 5-2² Check boxes
 5-2³ Upright option
 5-2⁴ Auto followed by Level, Vertical and Full options
 5-2⁵ Manual Tab

camera up when photographing a tall building. This makes the building in the image look as it is leaning backwards. This is not in the strict sense an error but an optical effect called **perspective**.

Picture 5-3: Before correcting for improper level and perspective. Note how the wall at the back is inclined and tower is leaning.



Many also call this as distortion but it is not so! This too can be eliminated or at least reduced greatly, again automatically. In fact both can be done in one go.

This is how you proceed. As pointed by arrow (Picture 5-2⁴), you have the option **Auto** followed by **Level**, **Vertical** and **Full**. What do these options do? Here is a brief explanation:

Auto: Corrects level, maintains aspect ratio, and corrects perspective.

Level: Perspective corrections biased to correct horizontal details. Good for landscapes.

Vertical: Perspective corrections biased to correct vertical details. Good for images with tall elements.

Full: Combines all of above

If this sounds confusing don't worry! Simply click on these one after another and see which corrects the image best and choose that (Picture 5-3 and 5-4). Normally Auto is good enough to correct any misaligned horizon.

Finally, you can click on the little triangle (Picture 5-1²) to collapse the tool.

Picture 5-4: After correction. Note how both the issues in Picture 5-3 have been virtually eliminated. Just one click did this!



Cropping: This is done for removing the unwanted areas in an image to improve composition and is also used to change the aspect ratio (width to height proportion). In addition, cropping must be done compulsorily whenever an image is straightened for correcting the inclination or rotation for whatever reason. If you use the Lens Corrections Tool for correcting improper level (you just read about this) the cropping is done automatically while maintaining the same aspect ratio as the original.

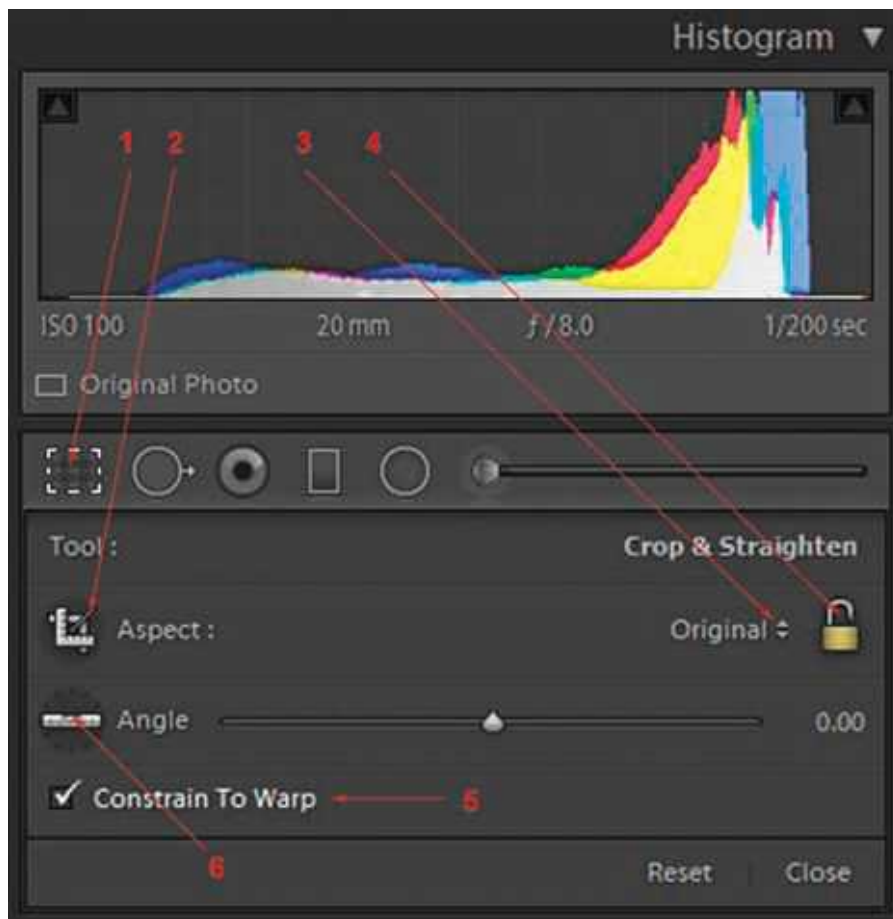
For cropping, first click on the **Crop Overlay** tool (Picture 5-5¹) and then on **Crop Frame** tool (Picture 5-5²). Now you will see that an overlay has appeared on the image. At this stage you must determine the aspect ratio. You can do this by clicking on **Aspect** (Picture 5-5³) and then from the pop-up menu choosing the aspect ratio. Choice of **Original** here will maintain the same aspect ratio of the original image. If you are planning to print the image, I suggest you choose some of the standard aspect ratios like 8X10, 4X6, etc.

Pay attention to the **Lock** symbol (Picture 5-5⁴). If you choose a specific aspect ratio, then the Lock symbol will close (locked, that is) and you will not be able to change it. You can make the crop overlay bigger or smaller but you will be constrained to the aspect ratio chosen. If you click on the Lock, it will get unlocked. You can change the aspect ratio arbitrarily as you wish now and the word Aspect (Picture 5-5³) will change to **Custom** to show that it is not a standard one anymore.

You can easily move the overlay once you are satisfied with the aspect ratio and size, by dragging it. (Note: Clicking and moving the mouse while keeping the button pressed is called dragging)

I also recommend that you keep the **Constrain To Warp** (Picture 5-5⁵) check box ticked. This will prevent some problems that might occur when lens corrections are made.

Manual Straightening: You have already seen how you can remove alignment errors automatically



by using the Lens Correction tool. Lightroom actually does a pretty decent job of this and I recommend that you use it. If you still want to align your images manually, then you can click on the **Angle** tool (Picture 5-5⁶). Now, find an element in the image that you want to be perfectly horizontal. Examples are roof of building, a wall, horizon, water body, etc.). Drag to draw a line that will be parallel to the element that you want to be perfectly horizontal. Press Return key to correct the problem.

Important Points when using the Crop Overlay tool:

- Pressing the **Return** key will complete the operation. Alternatively you can also click on the **Done** button at the bottom right of the Preview area.
- Remember that cropping throws away pixels, hence it is better you know the pixel count of the cropped image. To see this, activate the overlay by pressing the "I" key. The first press

Picture 5-5: The Crop Overlay tool for cropping and manually straightening images.

- 5-5¹ Crop Overlay tool
- 5-5² Crop Frame
- 5-5³ Aspect ratios
- 5-5⁴ Lock for aspect ratio
- 5-5⁵ Constrain To Warp check box
- 5-5⁶ Angle tool

of "I" will give you file name plus exposure data and the second press the pixel count. Another press will make the overlay disappear (See also Table 5-1).

- Pressing "x" key will toggle the cropping overlay from Landscape to Portrait format and vice versa.

At this stage, you have corrected the lens errors. Other operations like fixing inclination, correcting perspective and cropping are also completed, if needed. In other words your image is now properly prepped to go to the next stage of development.

The tool you should use next is the **Basic** tool. This name Basic is a bit of a misnomer because it does some important and advanced operations. It is called so because it comprises of a set of adjustments that are most essential for development. In fact in many cases, the Basic tool is all what you would need for development.

The Basic tool can be used to adjust several parameters, with help of sliders (Picture 5-6). Before you start any development, let us assume that you are going to process the image in **colour** (Picture 5-6¹). So, click on

colour option first. The Basic tool parameters themselves can be divided into three groups - **White Balance** (Picture 5-6²), **Tone** (Picture 5-6³) and **Presence** (Picture 5-6⁴), each of which has several parameters as given here.

1. White Balance (WB) (Picture 5-6⁷): Temp and Tint (Picture 5-6⁷).

2. Tone (Picture 5-6⁸): Exposure, Contrast, Contrast, Highlights, Shadows, Whites and Blacks.

3. Presence (Picture 5-6⁹): Clarity, Vibrance and Saturation.

Let us start looking at WB first. As you know the camera sets a WB to remove the colour cast that might have been caused due to the colour temperature of the light source. If the camera has done a good job then you need not do anything. In case it has not, then you must adjust the WB to remove the colour cast.

There are two ways of doing this. All of them work with JPEG or Raw files but their effectiveness is much greater when you use Raw files.

Method 1: The simplest way is to use the **WB Selector** tool (Picture 5-7²) but there is a catch to this. You need to locate a pure gray area in the image (called the “neutral area”) and just click on it and Lightroom will remove the colour cast. *The catch is that it is not always possible to find a neutral area and this limits the usage of this tool.* Hence, wherever possible, you should keep a gray card (Picture 5-7³) to provide the neutral area in the same lighting conditions as the subject.

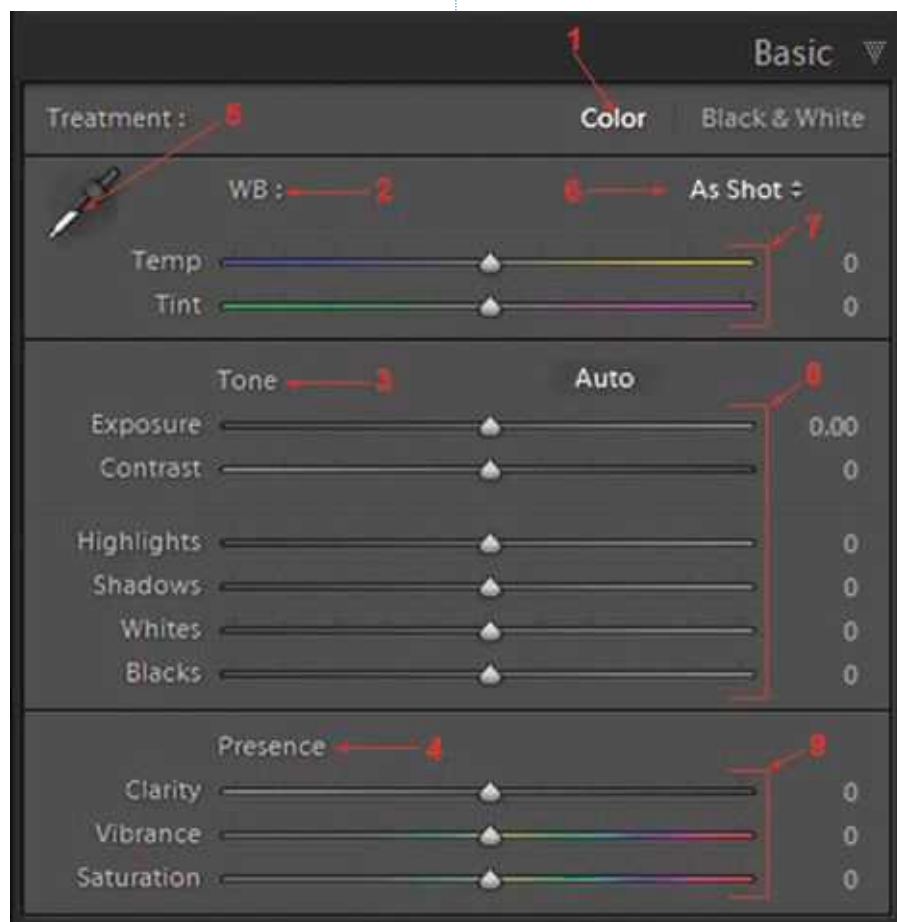
Method 2: The second way to correct WB is by selecting a WB from the choices available (Picture 5-7⁵). The first option is **As Shot** which means that WB currently is what the camera had used when capturing the image. If you click here you will get a range of choices viz., Auto, Daylight, Cloudy, etc. These are called preset WB values. You can try these one after another and see if one of them suits you or at least is close to what you want.

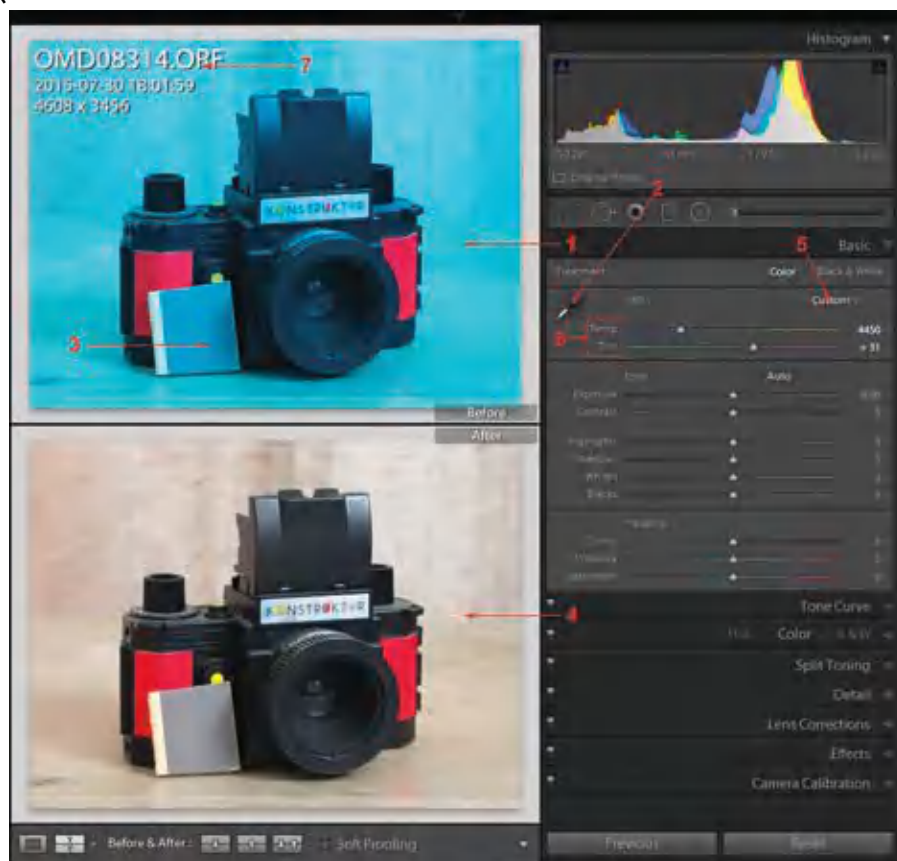
If you are not satisfied with the result you obtained after you choose a preset WB as just described then you can fine tune the WB with **Temp** and **Tint** (Picture 5-7⁶) sliders as explained below:

Temp Slider: This is based on the Kelvin colour temperature scale. As indicated by the colour of the slider itself, dragging the slider to the left will make the image more blue (cooler) while dragging it to the right will make the image more orange (warmer).

Tint Slider: This is used for correcting green or magenta cast. As before the colour of the slider gives you the hint. Dragging the slider to left adds green and the opposite direction adds magenta.

Picture 5-6: The Basic tool with its various parameters.
5-6¹ colour or Black & White
5-6² WB group
5-6³ Tone control group
5-6⁴ Presence group
5-6⁵ WB Selector tool
5-6⁶ WB selection
5-6⁷ WB group sliders
5-6⁸ Tone group sliders
5-6⁹ Presence group sliders





Picture 5-7: The subject was photographed with incandescent bulb WB when the light source had a colour temperature that was higher causing this blue cast (5-7¹). A single click with the WB Selector tool (5-7²) on the gray card (5-7³) was all that was needed to correct WB (5-7⁴).

You can also get the same effect through the alternate method of selecting a preset WB (Picture 5-7⁵) and then fine tuning with Temp and Tint sliders (Picture 5-7⁶).

- 5-7¹ Before WB correction
- 5-7² WB Selector tool
- 5-7³ Gray card
- 5-7⁴ After WB Correction
- 5-7⁵ WB selection
- 5-7⁶ Temp and Tint sliders
- 5-7⁷ Overlay giving image information (usable with all tools)

Picture 5-7 shows an image before and after the WB correction. This shows how important WB correction is.

Short cuts: Table 5-1 gives you some shortcuts to help you use the Develop module efficiently. |SP

Table 5-1 – Shortcuts	
Shortcut	What it does
X key	Toggles the cropping overlay from Landscape to Portrait format and vice versa.
W key	Invokes WB Selector tool (Picture 5-7 ²).
I Key	Toggles information overlay (Picture 5-7 ⁷).

CONCLUSION

This article explains how to execute the first steps in the workflow for developing images. These are applying lens corrections, straightening images and correcting perspective. The last two are optional and are not needed every time. You have also seen how to correct colour casts that might occur due to improper

WB settings.

I will conclude by reminding readers once again that all the operations described in this article including straightening and cropping are fully non-destructive and you can change any of them whenever you wish!

Next month: You are now ready to take up tone corrections. This will be the topic for the coming month.

Photopro 300 DT

The New D-Tech Studio Flash System



A revolutionary Product

To create an accurate impact on photos lighting turns out to be a crucial dynamic. Therefore having well-suited combination of lighting become essential. In such scenario studio flash lights plays key role, they propose boundless creative possibilities for the ardent photograph or still-life photographer.

Photopro, India's one of the most reliable photography equipment manufacturer, provides the New Photopro 300 DT, a revolutionary product.

The New D-Tech Studio Flash System variable control with 40 steps unique in it's range with color corrected flash tube and it's light weight body not only makes it ideal for small shoots in studio but also very easy to carry for perfection in works.



ACCESSORIES

Light stand, Softbox 60x60 Pro, with carry bag, Safety cap, Main cable, Syncro cable, warranty card, box

Technical Specification

Flash output (w/s) Max.- 125, Flash output (w/s) Min.- 20w, Dimmer-Yes, Half n Full-No, *F.Stop 1meter with 21cm. 55 degree metal ref. with silver reflective- 32 1/3, Recycling Time- 2 Sec., Modelling Lamp-100w, Flash Duration- 1/3000 Sec., Twin-Tech-No, Body- Plastic, Weight-1 Kg.,



Polarising Filters

□ Rohinton Mehta

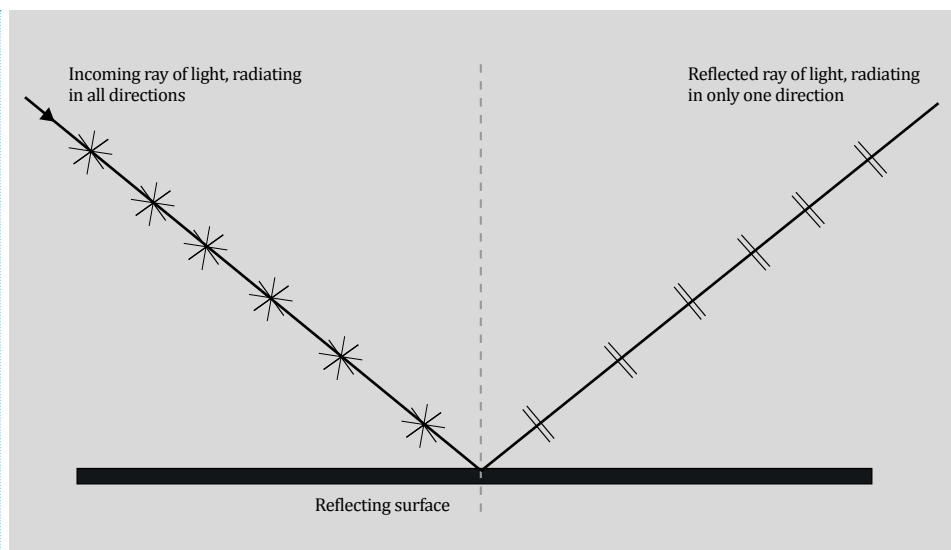
SP reader Arijit Das had requested us to explain, in Ask Uncle Ronnie, how to correctly use a polarising filter. Since the explanation is rather lengthy, we decided to have a separate write-up on it.

A polarising filter is one of the three very important filters for use in digital photography – the other two being the Neutral Density and Graduated Neutral Density filter. Used correctly, a polarising filter reduces atmospheric haze, removes glare, saturate colours, deepens blue sky and to a certain extent increases shadow details.

First things first. There are two types of polarising filters: **Linear and Circular**. Don't confuse the 'Circular' variety as being round in shape and the other, some other shape. Both are round in shape! The difference lies in the way they are constructed. Film SLRs (with some exceptions) used the Linear Polariser. With the advent of digital SLRs, it became necessary to have a Circular polarising filter.

Note: The physics involved in understanding 'polarisation of light' and how a Circular Polariser (CPL) actually works, is, to say the least, beyond the scope of this article. The explanation given below is over-simplified and hence from a point of view of those deeply involved in physics, may not be entirely correct. Those who want to delve deep in its theory, can look up a highly technical write-up by Bob Atkins (www.bobatkins.com)

See the sketch below. The incoming ray of light is un-polarised light (vibrating



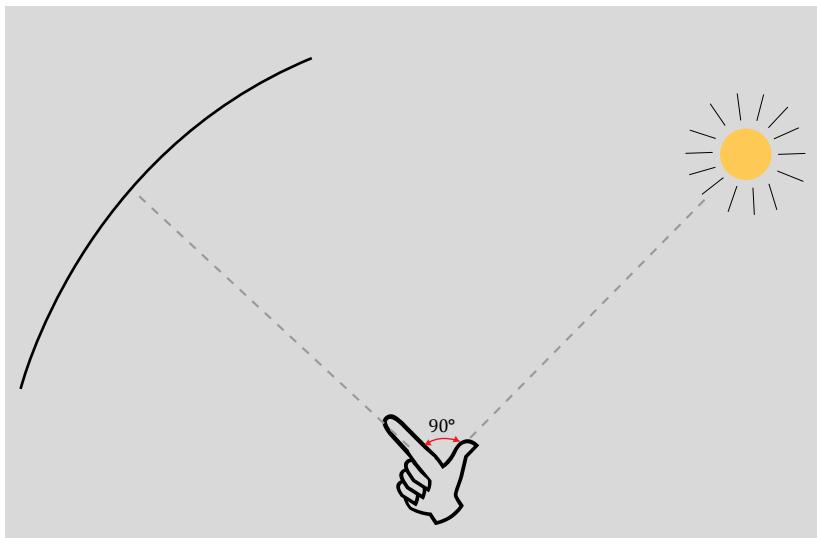
in all directions). When it gets reflected off any surface, it gets polarised (vibrates in any one direction only). Now if you were to place a polarising filter in the path of the polarised light, depending on the angle of polarisation, it could partially, or to a great extent, block the light, thereby also reducing the reflection from the surface. This is basically how a polariser works.

Modern D-SLRs use a reflex mirror that reflect some amount of light to the metering system and the viewfinder, and also transmit some light to the AF sensors. If you were to use a Linear Polariser on such a camera, there could be metering errors as well as

autofocussing errors. Hence, with D-SLRs, we need to use a Circular Polariser.

Note: You can safely use a Linear Polariser with mirrorless cameras; there is no mirror where the problem-causing secondary polarisation could take place. Note also that you can use a CPL with film cameras.

Any filter placed in front of the lens causes a loss in the amount of light entering the lens. Since all modern cameras use Through-the-Lens (TTL) metering, this problem is automatically taken care of. Typically, a polariser reduces about 1.5 -2 stops of light.



Avoid using an ultra-wide-angle lens when trying to darken the sky with a polariser. If you do, you will get uneven darkening.



With Polariser



Without Polariser

To darken a blue sky

Note that, using a polarising filter, you can darken a blue sky, not a grey sky (grey skies will of course darken if you underexpose it!)

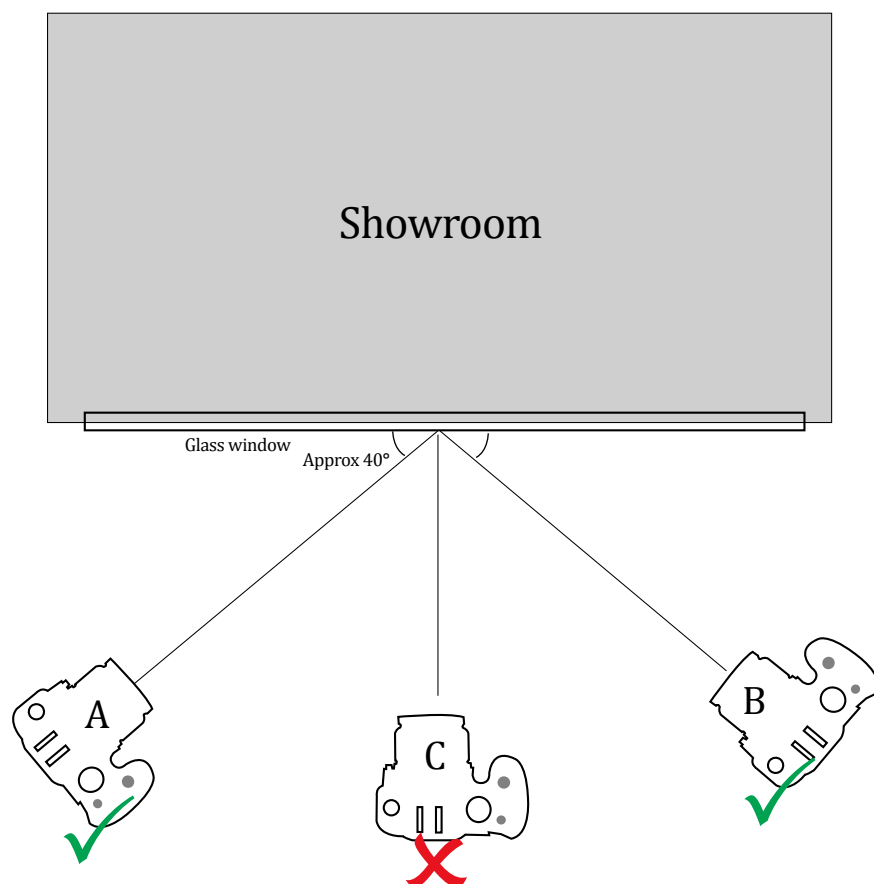
To darken a blue sky with a polariser, the axis of the lens should be at 90 degrees to the sun. See the sketch. The thumb is pointing to the sun; the area of the sky along the arc created by the index finger will be darkened.

In an emergency, a polarising filter can be used instead of a neutral density filter.

With Polariser



With Polariser



Shooting from positions A and B can remove reflections from the glass. Position C is a wrong.

To remove/reduce reflection

The polarising filter can be used to get rid of annoying reflections from glass, wood, water, paper, and painted metal (it cannot remove reflections from bare metal). For this to work, the polariser-mounted lens should make an angle of approximately 40 degrees to the reflecting surface. See sketch. If you stand bang opposite the glass, you will not be able to get rid of the reflections.

Try this out on show-windows, water bodies or try to see who's at the steering wheel in a parked car.

To saturate colours in a landscape shot

Reflections from the leaves of trees cause a loss of contrast and colour. Since a polariser cuts reflections, it removes the effect of glare, saturates the colours and increases contrast.

Additionally, it reduces the effects of atmospheric haze (does not eliminate it completely).



Without Polariser



With Polariser

Increases shadow details

The fact that the polariser cuts reflections and the fact that you need to increase exposure by 1.5 - 2 stops (which the camera does automatically in TTL exposure mode), you will actually see a bit more details in the subject. |SP

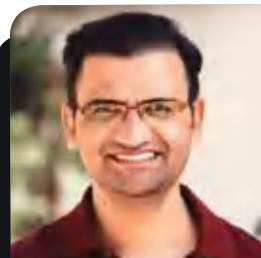
CONCLUSION

The polarising filter is probably the most important filter for a digital photographer. Do note that cheap PL filters could cause unwanted colour casts in your pictures and hence you are advised to stick to the known brands, even though they may be expensive.



Without Polariser

7 Must-Know BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY Tips for Beginners



Prathap

Prathap is a professional nature photographer and founder of a blog called 'Nature Photography Simplified'. His motto is to simplify every photography concept to help beginners and amateur photographers. Subscribe to his blog to get his free eBook, 'Bird Photography - 10 Mistakes and Solutions', which has been instrumental in helping thousands of bird photographers around the world. To see more of his work visit www.prathapphotography.com.

What's important in bird photography?

Is it the camera, the lens, or the bird?

Imagine: You are photographing an American Bald Eagle. You have a professional camera with 8fps and a 600mm lens. Also, you have the required tripod support system.

Everything seems perfect. *Isn't it?*

If you are a beginner, most likely you will point at the bird and shoot. Won't you?

What do you get?

You get hundreds of bird photographs that may not be useful at all.

Are they worth sharing? Are you happy with what you got?

I bet not. Read this quote by the master photographer, Ansel Adams.

"There is nothing worse than a sharp image of a fuzzy concept." — Ansel Adams

So, what's important?

It's you.

Gear up to understand what makes a good bird photograph and you will not be the same again.

These 7 bird photography tips will take your bird photography to new heights.

1. Camera & Settings

Bird photography needs a decent focal

length. No second thoughts about it. But you need not have to break your bank to get a super telephoto lens like 600mm. Go with a decent focal length like 300mm.

Make sure the lens has an image stabilisation feature like VR (Vibration Reduction for Nikon) or IS (Image Stabilization for Canon).



Birds are always active. In order to stop the action you need a good number of frames per second. A camera body with a frame rate of at least 5 fps is good to capture the action.

Focussing is critical to the success. A poorly focused bird ruins the photograph. Get a camera body that has decent number of focus points. The more the better. Try for at least 39 focus points and above. Also, check the number of cross focus points available. Again, the more the better.

Here's a good starting point with the settings:

- Work with semi-automatic modes so that you don't have to worry much about the settings. Use Aperture Priority or Shutter Priority mode.
- Use continuous auto focus mode like AF-C (for Nikon) or AI-Servo (for Canon).
- Use burst or high-speed continuous modes.
- Use zone-focusing system and select 9-point or 21-point zone. This helps to keep the focus tight on the bird and makes the autofocus snappier.
- Use ISO-400 for action shots. If your camera is too noisy at ISO 400, try to

avoid shooting in low light conditions.

Test every setting thoroughly. See what suits your style of photography the best. **Stick with it.**

2. It's All About Light

Photography is all about light.

Do you believe it? If you said yes, then learn to see the light. Study the light. Embrace it. **Your bird photographs will shine.**

Light has **quality** and **direction**. The quality of light is either **soft** or **hard**.

Soft light is the early morning and early evening light. **Soft light is the best light** for bird photography because:

- It helps to bring out the beautiful and subtle colors.
- It has a golden glow during dawn and dusk.
- It casts soft shadows on the bird creating a subtle depth.

Hard light is rest of the day light. During sunny days, hard light casts unwanted shadows making it a less favorable light for bird photography.

The direction of light is **frontal**, **side**, or **back**.

Frontal light is the most favourable light for bird photography. It's an ideal light to showcase the beauty of the bird.

Side light is the least favourable light. It casts the unwanted shadow on the bird.

Back light leads to creative photographs. It is helpful in creating silhouettes. It also helps in creating a halo (rim-light) around the bird giving it an angel look. This also helps to separate the bird from its background.

Then there is the **diffused light**. It's the best light for portrait shots. It models the bird perfectly. There will not be any unwanted shadows. Diffused light allows you to shoot the whole day.

3. Composition

Your message should be loud and clear.

Convey your message through your photograph with a simple but strong composition. Composition for bird photography is not tough at all and yet it is often ignored.

Here are some principles of



composition to make your bird photographs stand out:

- Use the rule of thirds to keep the bird off-center.
- Give enough breathing space in the direction of movement or gaze.
- Aim for light or colour contrast between the bird and the background. This helps the autofocus to focus faster. Also, it helps to make the bird stand out.
- Fill the frame with the bird so that the focus is only on the bird.
- Use clean or plain background and avoid distractions at all cost.

It's not always possible to get the composition right in the field, though you should try your best. If needed, never hesitate to re-compose the image during post-processing stage.

4. Transport the Viewer into the Bird's World

Our world is different from the bird's world.

Just imagine. When you talk to someone, how do you connect with him/her? Through eye contact... right? The eye contact is critical in establishing a relationship.

If you have to connect with the birds, you have to do the same. You have to establish an eye contact with the bird to make successful and intimate bird photographs. How do you do that?

Go Low and Go Slow...

Always try to photograph the birds from their eye-level. Except the birds in flight, of course!

Bend down, kneel down, lay down, or do whatever it takes to get to the





around the bird, because normally the background will be too far.

- You'll not disturb the bird, because you can't move much. You are not a threat anymore.
- You'll transport the viewer into the bird's world.

5. Capture their Actions and Behaviour

It's quite easy to photograph birds in action.

Why? They hardly sit still! Action is always there, but it requires more effort and patience. But it's fun.

Here are few tips to capture the action:

- Photograph early in the morning when birds are very active.
- Use burst shot mode to take several photographs during the action.
- Track the bird until focus is locked before pressing the shutter.
- Learn to anticipate the action by studying their behaviour.

bird's eye-level. Some of the obvious benefits are:

- You'll get intimate photographs of birds,

because you can make an eye connection.

- You'll get pleasing blur (or bokeh)



Birds tend to ignore you when they are very hungry. It is very easy to photograph them in action at these times. But care should be taken **not to disturb** them. Maintain considerable distance between you and them.

Capturing bird's **behaviour** is tougher! They become alert the moment you are in their sight. An alert bird is ready to take-off anytime. So, you have to be patient.

You can observe the bird's behaviour only when they on their own. They have to be comfortable in your presence. There are few ways to make the bird comfortable:

- Go early in the morning when birds are actively feeding.
- Hide behind a bush or tree and move slowly.
- Sit or lie down quietly. Wait patiently until the bird ignores you.
- Visit the location several days until the bird becomes comfortable with your presence.

Remember to learn about the birds that you are photographing. Study their behaviour while you are waiting. The more you understand the bird, the

better your photographs will be.

6. Birds in Flight

Birds fly and that's what set them apart. Isn't it?

The most interesting part of bird photography is capturing their magnificent flight. This is a tricky aspect for beginners and pros alike. It is not easy to take flight photographs that will **wow** the viewers.

The success of birds-in-flight photography largely depends on the bird as well as the technique that one employs.

Smaller birds have erratic flight behaviors. It becomes quite difficult to track them since they are too small in the frame. Larger birds normally follow a pattern. You can guess what happens next. It becomes easier to track them.

If you want to be a successful birds-in-flight photographer, you should start with the larger and slow moving birds. Learn all the field techniques to capture perfect photographs of these birds.

Once you are confident with the techniques, you can venture on to the smaller birds.

Here are some simple tips to capture birds-in-flight photographs:

- Learn about the birds' flight patterns.
- Know their landing and take-off patterns.
- Spend enough time in the field observing them.
- Wait for some cues to anticipate the next action. For instance, many birds defecate before taking off, some birds run to gain momentum, etc.
- If there is more than one bird, it is almost always the case that if one flies the rest will follow.
- Track the bird for a while and let the camera achieve focus.
- Wait for the best background.
- Take the shots in a continuous burst.
- Use Aperture Priority or Shutter Priority mode to keep things simple.
- Go for ISO 400 so that you get reasonably fast shutter speeds and without any digital noise.
- Make sure to get the wings in upwards position as much as possible.



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7. Background Makes the Picture

Do you really care for the background in your photographs?

If you said yes, you might want to check your gallery again. Because you might not have really checked it thoroughly.

Why does that happen? You might have photographed a gorgeous bird. But you see that the photograph is not appealing. Something is not right. The most likely reason is the distracting background.

Remember that the background is as important as the subject.

But, generally, you are so bogged down with your subject that you won't see anything else. That's natural!

The problem is that **it doesn't work**.

Only when the background is clean and/or complementary, the bird has a chance to grab the viewer's attention. The bird has to be complemented by its surroundings; the surroundings should not be distracting.

Below are few simple tips to get a clean background:

- Wait for the bird to assume a good position.
- Change your position to get an interesting background.
- Aim for shallow depth-of-field to throw the background out of focus.

Basically you have to avoid distracting backgrounds. If possible, also avoid plain and boring backgrounds like white sky. It makes for a boring photograph.

The next time you make a bird photograph, don't forget to check the background. *This is the best bird photography tip you can follow.*

Bonus Tip: Practice with Common Birds

It's not about rare species, it's about rare photographs!

Most often, bird photographers run behind rare species. They travel many



miles to photograph a rare species. Why? Are you documenting the birds? Are you creating a portfolio of different bird species?

It's not necessary. Think about it. *Do you like a rare photo of a common bird? Or a common photo of a rare bird?*

Practice with the common birds. Apply all the above techniques. Improve your photography first. Get to know their behavior. Understand how light impacts the mood of a photograph. Try new compositions.

Make Something Unique. | **SP**

CONCLUSION

Fully charged now?

Want to go out and practice? That's great. That's exactly what you should do. Practice, practice...and practice!

Focus your time and energy on learning all the core principles outlined above. Prove it to yourself that you have great passion to go out and photograph the birds every day or as often as you can.

Remember: Proper techniques will always outsmart the equipment.

Make every attempt to make amazing photographs of the common birds. Enjoy photographing birds. That is the secret to success.

Is there a park nearby? Is there a water body? A forest preserve, perhaps?

Whatever it is, just go there. Photograph birds. Take action. Unless you photograph you won't improve.





Lens Review

AF-S DX Nikkor 16-80mm
f/2.8-4E ED VR



Lens Review

Sigma 24-35mm
f/2 DG HSM | A



Smartphone Review

Asus Zenfone 2 Laser



First Look

Manfrotto Off Road Tripod

First Look

Sony Professional
Sd Cards

Reviews

Change in Rating System

Smart Photography's new rating system exercises stricter evaluation in view of improvements in the overall performance of photographic equipment. Marks will be awarded for the following parameters...

Final Rankings

Recommended75-80%
Best Buy81% and above

D-SLR CAMERAS

Design & Build Quality.....	(out of 20)
Key Features.....	(out of 20)
Ergonomics.....	(out of 20)
Performance	
Autofocus.....	(out of 5)
Metering.....	(out of 5)
Noise control.....	(out of 5)
Distortion/Sharpness.....	(out of 5)
LCD/Viewfinder.....	(out of 5)
Auto White Balance.....	(out of 5)
Value for Money.....	(out of 10)
Grand Total.....	(out of 100)

LENSES

Design & Build Quality.....	(out of 20)
Key Features.....	(out of 20)
Ergonomics.....	(out of 20)
Performance	
Autofocus.....	(out of 5)
Sharpness.....	(out of 5)
Distortion control.....	(out of 5)
Aberrations.....	(out of 5)
Darkening of corners.....	(out of 5)
Extra Features.....	(out of 5)
Value for Money.....	(out of 10)
Grand Total.....	(out of 100)

COMPACT CAMERAS

Design & Build Quality.....	(out of 20)
Key Features.....	(out of 20)
Ergonomics.....	(out of 20)
Performance	
Autofocus.....	(out of 5)
Metering.....	(out of 5)
Noise control.....	(out of 5)
Distortion/Sharpness.....	(out of 5)
LCD/Viewfinder.....	(out of 5)
Auto White Balance.....	(out of 5)
Value for Money.....	(out of 10)
Grand Total.....	(out of 100)



Inside the Box

- ✓ Lens
- ✓ 72 mm snap-on Front Lens Cap LC-72
- ✓ Rear Lens Cap LF-4
- ✓ Bayonet Hood HB-7

Most DX format cameras come with their standard kit lenses, which are usually in the range of 18-55mm. Though this is sufficient for budget-conscious amateurs, advanced photographers who have a little more disposable income might find the slow aperture and the short zoom range a limitation that is beyond compromise. For them, Nikon has brought out the AF-S DX Nikkor 16-80mm f/2.8-4E ED VR, which has a more useful zoom range and a faster aperture range than a standard kit lens.

Design and Build Quality

The Nikkor 16-80mm f/2.8-4E ED VR lens is a consumer lens constructed predominantly of carbon composites. The lens has internal focussing, which prevents it from protruding and the front element from rotating during focussing. However, zooming from the wide-angle to the telephoto end makes the lens protrude by about 4.1cm. The barrel has markings for the common popular zoom positions—16, 24, 35, 50, and 80mm. There is a focus distance window, legibly marked in metres and feet. The lens has a three-barrel construction. It has three switches—AF selector (M/A, M), VR On/Off, and VR Mode (Normal, Active). The zoom ring has a textured rubber finish, while the focus ring is plastic with serrations.

This lens is not of the professional grade, yet feels sturdy. It has a metal mount and comes with a lens hood, probably optimised for videos.

The lens accepts filters of 72mm size. The Nikkor 16-80mm has dimensions of approximately 80 mm dia. x 85.5



**AF-S DX Nikkor
16-80mm
f/2.8-4E ED VR**

₹ 74,950

□ Sujith Gopinath

Strategic Release

mm (distance from camera lens mount flange) and weighs 480g.

Key Features

The Nikkor 16-80mm f/2.8-4E ED VR lens (24-120mm equivalent) is a DX model, which means it is primarily designed for D-SLRs with APS-C type sensors. If you use it with old FX (Full Frame) bodies, it will cause vignetting. However, the latest FX format bodies offer automatic switching to DX crop mode, which will prevent vignetting. The lens has built-in CPU and a Silent Wave focus Motor (SWM) so that it can focus even with bodies that do not have focussing motors, such as D3300 and D5500. The E-designation means that it uses an electromagnetic diaphragm mechanism.

The lens is constructed with 17 elements in 13 groups including 4 Extra-low Dispersion (ED) and 3 aspherical elements, along with

Nano-Crystal Coat (to reduce flare and ghosting) or fluorine (for better water-repulsion). Aperture ranges from f/2.8 to 22 at the wide-angle end and f/4.0 to 32 at the telephoto end. It has a minimum focussing distance of 35cm. The lens features optical VR (Vibration Reduction) to keep images steady even with shaky hands, especially in low-light. The lens has automatic electronic aperture control with a 7-bladed diaphragm providing a rounded aperture opening. It provides TTL full aperture metering. The 16-80mm features internal focussing and provides Manual (M) and Manual/Auto (M/A) modes for focussing.

Ergonomics

The Nikkor 16-80mm f/2.8-4E ED VR lens is light and comfortable to use. We received a new piece, and the zoom ring was a bit stiff. But it will loosen up a bit with regular use, and we expect it to provide optimal damping. The focus



Aperture: f/4
Shutter Speed: 1/60sec
ISO: 800

FINAL SCORE



82.5%

Design and Build Quality 17/20



Key Features 17/20



Ergonomics 18/20



Performance

Autofocus 4.5/5

Sharpness 4/5

Distortion control 2.5/5

Aberrations 4/5

Darkening of corners 3/5

Extra features 4.5/5

Sub-Total 22.5/30

Value for Money 8/10



PLUS

- Excellent value for money
- Fast and effortless AF
- Good flare control
- No Chromatic Aberration
- Superior VR

MINUS

- Too much distortion

VERDICT

The AF-S DX Nikkor 16-80mm f/2.8-4E ED VR lens can be considered a budget alternative to a fast standard zoom lens, that is faster than f/4, which, by now, has become synonymous to the 'second line' of premium lenses. At this price point, the lens is an excellent buy if you are looking for a good quality wide-angle to telephoto lens, but are not satisfied with a fixed f/4 lens. We wish it had better distortion control though.

ring rotates less than 180 degrees. The switches are very responsive.

Performance

The Nikkor 16-80mm f/2.8-4E ED VR lens performed very well in our tests. We tested the lens on a Nikon D750 body. Autofocus was fast and precise, and the system did not have any problem locking on to the subject even under reasonably-low light. Vibration Reduction proved excellent, though we do not have a precise scientific mechanism to gauge the efficiency of the system. At 80mm, I could shoot reasonably sharp images even at 1/2 sec shutter speed, which, I believe, is incredible.

Out-of-the-box JPEG images appeared sharp, and the sweet spot shifted progressively from f/4 to f/8 going from the wide-angle to the telephoto end. We observed prominent darkening of corners at f/2.8 at the wide-angle end, which progressively decreased and finally vanished at f/8. The lens controlled flare very well, though slight flare was observed. We did not find any trace of Chromatic Aberration in strong against-the-light shots at the wide-angle end with the lens wide open.

The lens produced extreme barrel distortion at 16mm. Pincushion

distortion started from 24mm, and at 80mm, it was most evident.

Value for Money

The AF-S DX Nikkor 16-80mm f/2.8-4E ED VR lens retails at Rs.74,950. This is good value for money for this lens. **ISP**

KEY SPECIFICATIONS

Type: Fmount, Type E AF-S DX lens with built-in CPU
Format: DX
Focal length: 16-, 80mm
Maximum aperture: f/2.8, -4.0
Minimum aperture: f/22, -32
Lens construction: 17elements in, 13groups, including 4 ED elements, 3 aspherical elements, and elements with Nano-Crystal or fluorine coatings
Angle of view: 83° to 20°
Minimum focus distance: 0.35m (1.15ft)
Image stabilization: VR (Vibration Reduction)
No. of diaphragm blades: 7 (rounded diaphragm opening)
Diaphragm: Automatic electronic aperture control
Metering: Full aperture
Filter-attachment size: 72mm, (P = 0.75 mm)
Dimensions: Approx. 80 mm maximum diameter x 85.5 mm (distance from camera lens mount flange)
Weight: Approx.480g
Autofocus: Yes
AF-S (Silent Wave Motor): Yes
Internal focusing: Yes

Maresh Reddy



Sigma's Art lenses have created a reputation amongst premium lenses for the brilliant optics and sturdy build quality. These new breed of lenses are compatible with Sigma's USB dock, which allows you to upgrade the lens firmware and also to make fine adjustments such as focus fine-tuning. The 24-35mm f/2 DG HSM | A joins the bandwagon with the same brilliance.

Design and Build Quality

The Sigma 24-35mm f/2 lens has a very sturdy construction with an optimum use of metal and engineering plastic. The lens shows its class with smooth, yet well-damped focus and zoom rings. There is only one switch that lets you select between AF and MF. A focus distance scale is incorporated, which has markings in both metres and feet.

The lens has a metal mount, but the filter thread is plastic. It has dimensions of 87.6 mm x 122.7 mm and weighs 940g.

Key Features

The Sigma 24-35mm f/2 DG HSM lens sports the A (Art) designation, which is tagged with premium models featuring superior optics and professional construction. The lens is compatible with both Full Frame and APS-C type D-SLRs. In fact, Sigma claims that the lens is the world's first f/2 Full Frame zoom lens. The lens is constructed with 18 elements in 13 groups including an FLD (premium glass that provides equivalent performance to fluorite) and an SLD (Special Low-Dispersion) glass element. The 24-35mm has a 9-bladed diaphragm, which provides a circular aperture. The lens has a minimum aperture of f/16 and filter size of 82mm. It focusses as close as 28cm and provides a maximum magnification of 1:4.4.



Inside the Box

- ✓ Lens
- ✓ Front & rear lens caps
- ✓ Lens case
- ✓ Lens hood (LH876-03)

**Sigma 24-35mm
f/2 DG HSM | A**

₹ 78,900

□ Sujith Gopinath

Carving a Niche

The lens is compatible with Sigma USB Dock, through which, you can fine-tune the focus and update firmware. Sigma claims that an updated AF algorithm in the lens makes autofocus more accurate and fast. The lens has a multi-layer coating to control flare and ghosting.

Sigma provides a flower shaped lens hood along with the lens.

Ergonomics

The Sigma 24-35mm f/2 DG HSM | A lens is not quite light at 940g. But the smooth focus and zoom rings make it comfortable to use. Both the rings have textured rubber finishing, which make them all the more comfortable to use. The focus ring rotates a little more than 90 degrees, which makes manual focussing effortless, but fine-tuning difficult. The lens employs internal focussing, which prevents

the front element from rotating. This makes it ideal for use with graduated and polarising filters. The lens has focal lengths marked at 24, 28, 30, and 35mm. The distance marking in feet is printed in grey, and this makes it difficult to read.

Performance

The Sigma 24-35mm lens performed reasonably well in our test. We received a Nikon mount lens and hence we tested it on a Nikon D750 body. Autofocus was very fast, precise and quiet. The lens did not have any problem focussing in low-light. The lens controlled darkening of corners very well. Darkening was observed at f/2 and f/2.8, but vanished completely at f/5.6. We did not observe any flare or chromatic aberration at the wide-angle end at 24mm in strong against-the-light shots. Images were sharp out



Aperture: f/8
Shutter Speed: 1/90sec
ISO: 400;

FINAL SCORE



82%

Design and Build Quality 19/20



Key Features 16/20



Ergonomics 17/20



Performance

Autofocus 4.5/5

Sharpness 4.5/5

Distortion control 3/5

Aberrations 4/5

Darkening of corners 4/5

Extra features 3/5

Sub-Total 23/30

Value for Money 7/10



PLUS

- First f/2 Full Frame zoom
- Excellent sharpness
- Superior build quality
- Brilliant aberration control

MINUS

- Limited utility of zoom
- Poor distortion control

VERDICT

The Sigma 24-35mm f/2 HSM | A lens has a very narrow zoom range, which, in my opinion, will not appeal to a great majority of photographers especially since the lens is as heavy as the Nikkor 24-70mm f/2.8 (non-VR). We presume that Sigma has been a little over-enthusiastic in producing the fastest full frame zoom lens that they compromised on the utility. However, considering the fast aperture, this lens is unmatched in this category.

KEY SPECIFICATIONS

Lens Construction: 18 elements in 13 groups

Angle of View: 84.1°-63.4°

Number of Diaphragm Blades: 9 (rounded diaphragm)

Minimum Aperture: f/16

Minimum Focusing Distance: 28 cm

Filter Size: 82mm

Maximum Magnifications: 1:4.4

Dimensions: 87.6 dia. x122.7 mm

Weight: 940g

Corresponding Mounts: Sigma DG HSM, Nikon DG HSM, Canon DG HSM

of the box. We observed that f/4 to f/11 produced the sharpest images throughout the zoom range and the sweet spot was f/5.6.

The lens produced rather heavy barrel distortion from 24 to 28mm and pin cushion distortion at 35mm.

Value for Money

The Sigma 24-35mm f/2 DG HSM | A lens retails at an MRP of Rs.78,900. At this price, the lens is reasonably priced. **ISP**

The Zenfone 2, launched in the first quarter of this year, boasted a category-leading 4GB RAM and variants suiting every user. The devices ranged from Rs.12,000 to Rs.22,000. With the Zenfone 2 Laser, Asus has enhanced the camera capabilities in an affordable smartphone promising to provide a class-leading battery life.

Design and Build Quality

The Zenfone 2 Laser is built similar to the other phones in Zenfone 2 series. The volume rocker/shutter release button is at the back, and the back panel is curved. The device is designed well, and the fact that it has been recognised with the 2015 iF Design Award, shows its brilliance in design. The edges of the phone are just 3.9mm thick, and the back cover is matte-finished like the Zenfone 5. At the rear are the camera flanked by the LED unit and the laser beam emitter and the volume control/shutter release button below this. Overall, the device is designed very well with a fairly good build quality.

Key Features

The Zenfone 2 Laser works on Android platform and the current version is 5.0 (Lollipop). Unlike the previous versions of Zenfone, which featured Intel Atom processors, Asus has switched to a 64 bit Quad-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 410 processor in the Laser, probably to bring down the cost and for better power saving features. Each core is clocked at 1.2 GHz. The processor is paired with an Adreno 306 GPU. The device has 2GB LPDDR3 RAM and uses 16GB eMMC Flash memory for internal memory (ROM). In addition to this, the Laser has a memory slot that accepts a MicroSD card up to 128 GB.

The device has dual Micro SIM slots and both of them support 2G, 3G, and 4G networks. However, it is on dual standby configuration, which means you have to specify which one can access calls, and which one should be on standby. The networks supported are WCDMA and



Inside the Box

- ✓ Asus Zenfone 2 Laser
- ✓ Battery
- ✓ Power adapter
- ✓ USB cord
- ✓ Warranty card

Asus Zenfone 2
Laser

₹ 9,999

□ Sujith Gopinath

Laser Beamer

Asus, traditionally known as a motherboard and laptop manufacturer, surprised all with the launch of their Zenfone series, which stormed the market with its value for money. In fact, the series led to high-end features trickling down to affordable smartphones.

FDD-LTE. It uses LTE category 4, which, Asus claims, will support transfer speeds of up to 150 Mbps.

The Zenfone 2 Laser uses a 5.5-inch, HD 1280x720, IPS display, protected by a Corning Gorilla Glass 4 screen. The screen provides 178 degree wide viewing angle and 267 ppi pixel density to offer crisp images even when viewed from the sides. The Zenfone 2 Laser boasts of Asus's SonicMaster technology, which

claims to deliver crystal clear audio under all environments.

The Laser incorporates a 13.0-megapixel PixelMaster rear camera with an f/2.0 lens. The camera captures images with zero shutter lag. The device uses Laser Autofocus, which measures the distance of the subject using a laser beam, and provides a fast autofocus speed of up to 0.2 sec. The front camera is 5 megapixels and it also has a wide aperture of f/2.0.

Both the cameras use Toshiba sensors (exact specifications not known). The camera features Backlight (Super HDR) and Super Resolution modes that can capture images with wide dynamic range and up to 52 megapixel resolution respectively. In the Super HDR mode, the camera creates an HDR image while post-processing. In Super Resolution mode, it combines four 13 megapixel images using Multi-frame Fusion technology to produce a 52 megapixel image with more detail and less noise. The camera also features an interesting Selfie Panorama mode to capture a panoramic selfie simply by tilting the camera from left to right. The Laser also features a full manual mode, which allows you to take full control of your camera for creative possibilities. The camera comes complete with a dual LED flash, which emits a combination of yellow and white light to capture skin tones well. Still images are recorded at a maximum resolution of 4096 x 3072 pixels, while videos can be recorded up to Full HD (1920 x 1080) quality.

The Asus Zenfone 2 Laser is powered by a removable 3000 mAh Li-Polymer battery. The Laser has dimensions of 152.5 x 77.2 x 3.9mm (WxDxH) and weighs 170 g (with battery).

Ergonomics

The Zenfone 2 Laser is comfortable to use, especially with the matte-finished back cover with a rubber-like texture. The phone allows you to tweak the display colours using the Screen Colour Mode option. This is very useful since smartphone displays tend to over-saturate and over-sharpen the displayed images. The Zen UI is easy to navigate and Asus has provided enough customisations to suit your

usage. Of the 16GB internal memory, 5.2GB is reserved for system files.

Performance

The Zenfone 2 Laser is aimed at the price-conscious customers who need a device that performs the essential functions well and has a good quality camera. The Snapdragon 410 processor's low power consumption feature became evident on benchmarking. AnTuTu battery benchmarking gave 14,884

points to the Laser, while the Zenfone 2 received only 7944 when we tested it in July. We would consider this excellent battery life. However, the AnTuTu performance benchmarking score came to 21,998, compared to the Zenfone 2's score of 46,547. This provides a fair idea of the placement of this device in the market.

Aperture: f/2.5
Shutter Speed: 1/6800sec
ISO: 100



Maresh Reddyw



The Zenfone 2 Laser has a laser beam emitter near the camera that helps in fast and accurate focussing

KEY SPECIFICATIONS

OS: Platform: Android 5.0 (Lollipop)
Colour: Charcoal Black/Ceramic White/Glamour Red
Dimensions: 152.5 x 77.2 x 3.9 ~ 10.8 mm (WxDxH)
Weight: 170 g (with battery)
CPU: Qualcomm Snapdragon 410
Memory: 2GB LPDDR3 RAM
Storage: 16GB eMMC Flash
Memory Slot: MicroSD card (up to 128 GB)
Connectivity Technology: WLAN 802.11 b/g/n
USB: Bluetooth V4.0
SIM: Dual Micro SIM
Network Standard: WCDMA/FDD-LTE
SIM1 Support: 2G/3G/4G
SIM2 Support: 2G/3G/4G
Display: 5.5-inch, HD 1280x720, IPS
Protective layer: Glass Corning Gorilla Glass 4
Battery: 3000 mAh Li-Polymer
Front camera: 5 Mega-Pixel, Auto Focus, f/2.0 Aperture, PixelMaster
Rear camera: 13 Mega-Pixel, Auto Focus, Wide View, f/2.0 Aperture, PixelMaster
Flash: LED light
Sensors: G-Sensor/E-Compass/Gyroscope/Proximity/Light Sensor/Hall Sensor

Coming to the camera, the main camera performed well in our tests. Laser autofocus did not provide any advantage in autofocus speed, but appeared to provide better accuracy in focussing. The focus confirmation (the green indicator) was erratic as we observed in most smartphones. Images were crisp and outdoor images captured in good light appeared rich and vibrant. Auto White Balance was surprisingly accurate in natural light and any cast produced under artificial light was easily removable in post-processing. Native print size was 12.2 x 13.6 inches at 300 ppi. At 25 percent screen size, the images appeared noise-free up to ISO 200, and were all usable. At 50 percent, we spotted noise from ISO 200 onwards. Images remained usable up to ISO 200. At 100 percent view, all images showed some noise, but image at ISO 50 could still be used. Images from the front camera were average in good light, but quite noisy in low light even at ISO 50.

The Laser is not for hardcore gamers and hence the gaming performance was not very impressive. But if you are

a light-games enthusiast, you can put up with this device.

Value for Money

The Zenfone 2 Laser with 16GB storage retails at an MRP of Rs.9,999. At this price, the device is certainly great value for money. **ISP**

FINAL SCORE



83%

Design and Build Quality 17/20



Key Features 16/20



Ergonomics 17/20



Performance 15/20



Value for Money 18/20



PLUS

- Superb battery life
- Excellent design
- Removable battery
- Great value for money
- Sharp images

MINUS

- Lag under heavy usage
- Front camera could have been better

VERDICT

The Asus Zenfone 2 Laser is a toned-down version of the Zenfone 2, with a Qualcomm Snapdragon processor and Laser autofocus. The USP of this device is its terrific battery life. Being an under-Rs.10000 phone, we have no qualms in awarding it a Best Buy.

Ball head with quick wheel. Cameras can be fixed very easily with this simple mechanism.



A leg section with scales. See also the "Stop" marking.

Manfrotto has introduced a series of new tripods called the "Off road" series. These are designed especially for hikers and mountaineers. In fact, Manfrotto engineered these in collaboration with Fizan Italy, a very famous outdoor goods manufacturer. The tripod has a metallic green finish (red and blue colours are also available). It is made in Italy and true to its Italian heritage, it is very handsome to look at.

This tripod is light as a feather (a shade less than 1.5 lbs./ 0.65b kgs, almost unbelievable) but can withstand rough and tough conditions. It can comfortably hold a mirrorless or a small sized D-SLR with a kit lens. Most parts can be easily removed and cleaned. So, you need not worry if your tripod takes a dip in the slush.

The tripod does not have a center column. Before you give it thumbs down, remember that the legs are easily extendable. There are no external locks. You just have to twist a leg section, pull it down and twist in the opposite direction to lock it. The leg sections have scales on them (we are seeing this for the first time). So, it is easy to adjust all the legs to a specific length.

However, pulling a leg (section) too much (pun intended) can get you into trouble! You are not supposed to pull the section beyond the "Stop" marking. If you do so, the leg section will get detached. This is a design feature to allow easy cleaning. You can of course, reinsert the detached leg section easily. The legs have spiked feet made of stainless steel to dig into soft soil. In case you want to use the tripod on hard surfaces, you

can use the rubber "boots" supplied.

The tripod comes with a very good ball head and has a unique screw system called 'quick wheel'. While this is not as fast a QR clamp, it is certainly faster than any other way of fixing the camera. A bubble level is also included. The tripod is a little short even when fully extended but that might have been a design decision to get the required lightness and to satisfy other design parameters.

To conclude, this is a super lightweight tripod which is rugged. It is made for people for whom every gram counts

and for those who want to travel really light. It satisfies that niche market admirably.

The tripod is currently available from the Manfrotto retailers. The MRP is Rs. 9,977/- **ISP**

KEY SPECIFICATIONS

Network Interface:	Material:	Aluminum
Weight:	01.43 lbs / 0.65 kgs	
Maximum load:	5.51 lbs / 2.5 kgs	
Folded length:	22 in / 56 cm	
Maximum height:	40 in / 122 cm	

Manfrotto

Ashok Kandimalla

Off Road Tripod

Over the years, the SD card has become a preferred mode for storage of images by both amateurs and professionals alike. Sony has now launched its SD cards for professionals and these come in two capacities – 32GB and 64GB.

Sony claim that their professional SD cards are designed for professional camcorders and achieve a higher level of strength and durability because of the special material used in their production and the use of double welding injection. The Sony SD cards for professionals, therefore, are more water proof, dust proof, shock and vibration proof, drop proof and bend/twist proof than the regular SD cards.

The Sony SD cards for professionals support both AVCHD and XAVC-S formats. Sony has developed an enhanced file recovery software which helps to achieve higher rates of recovery. Professional SD card users



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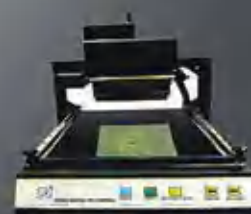
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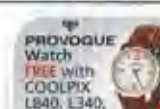
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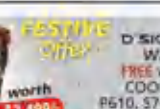
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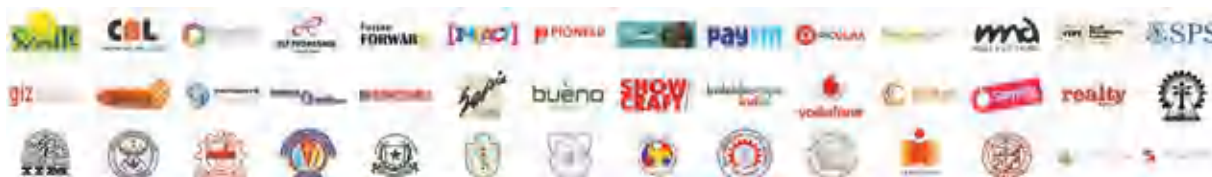
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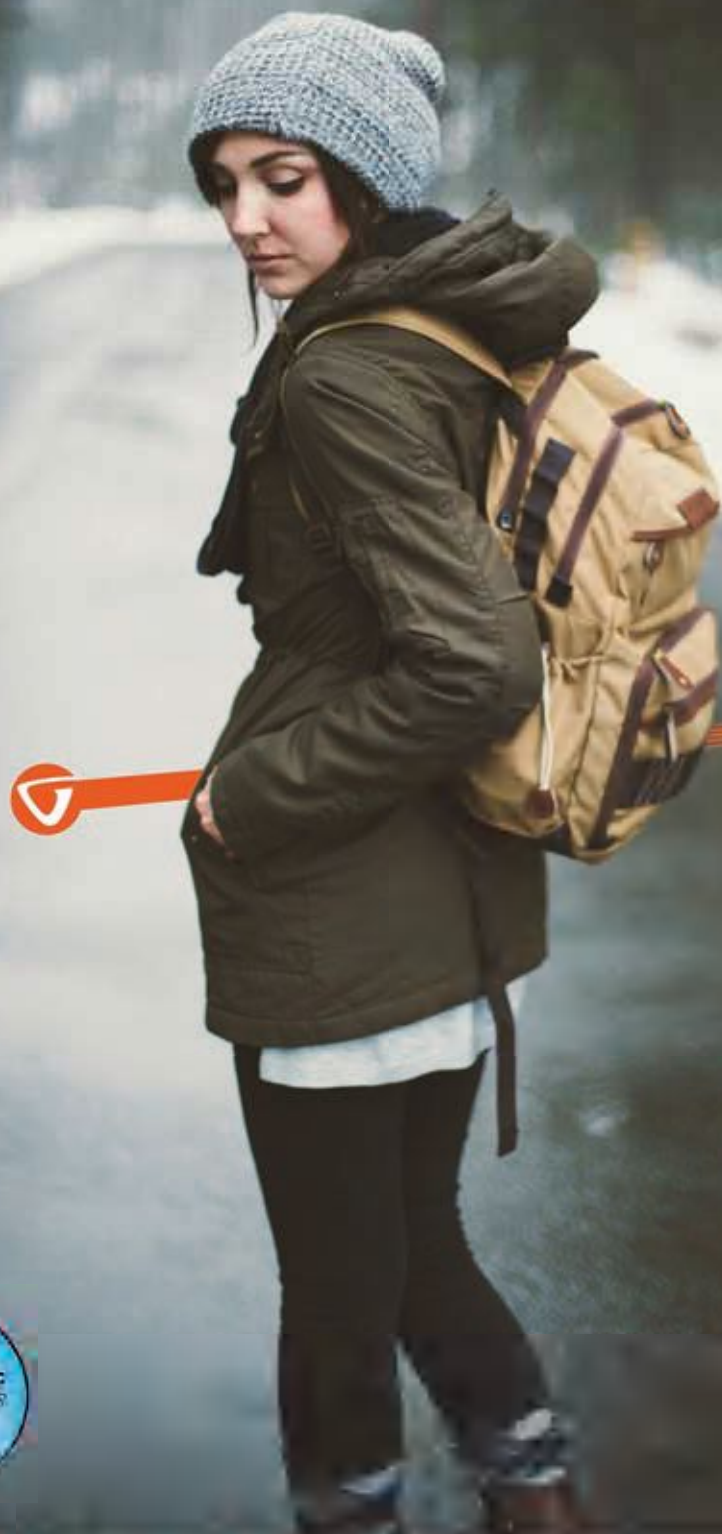
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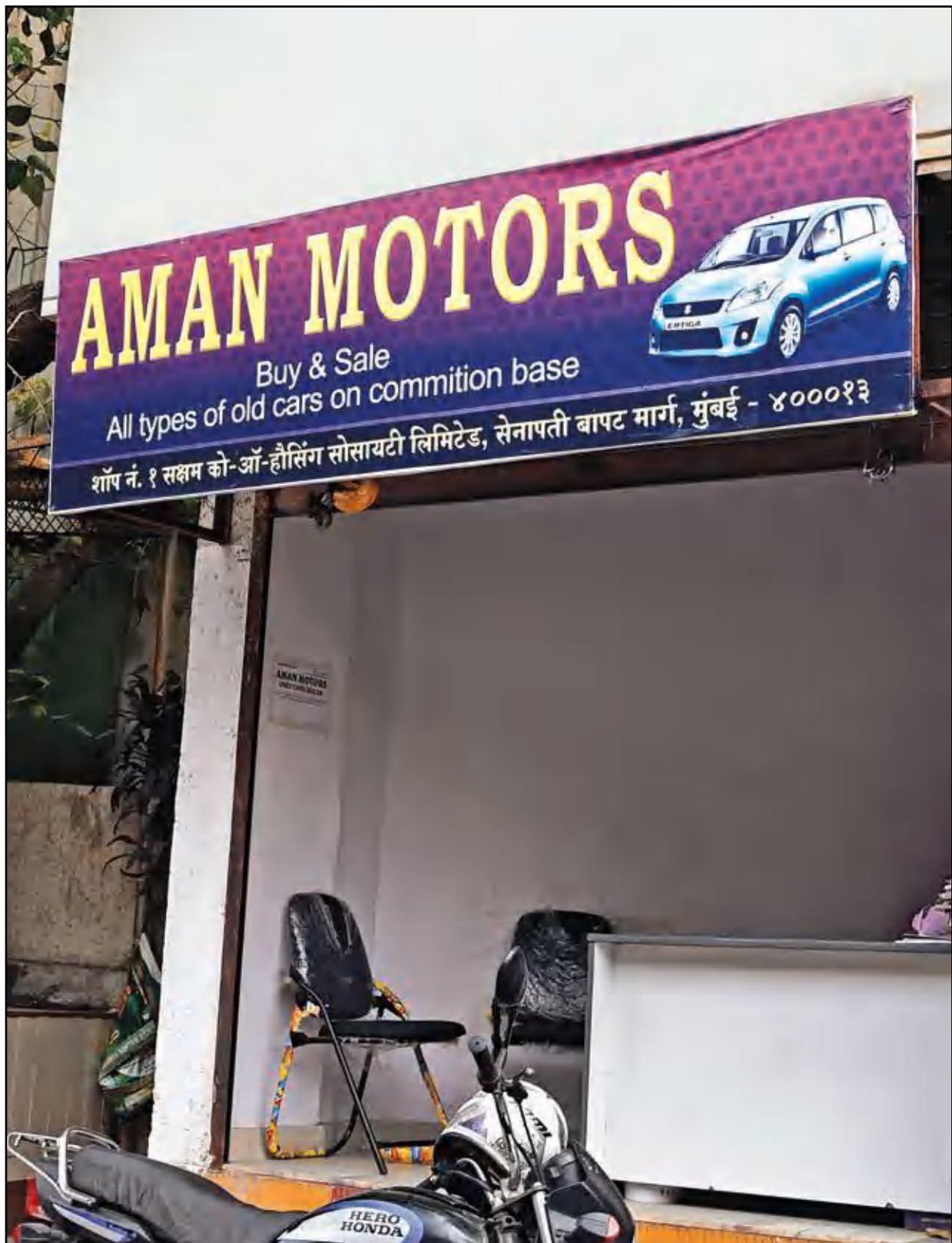
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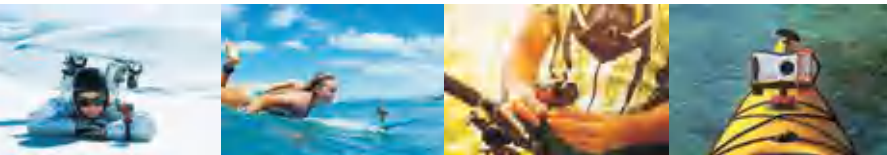


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